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David Corn

KERRY'S ARMY
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O RALPH NADER
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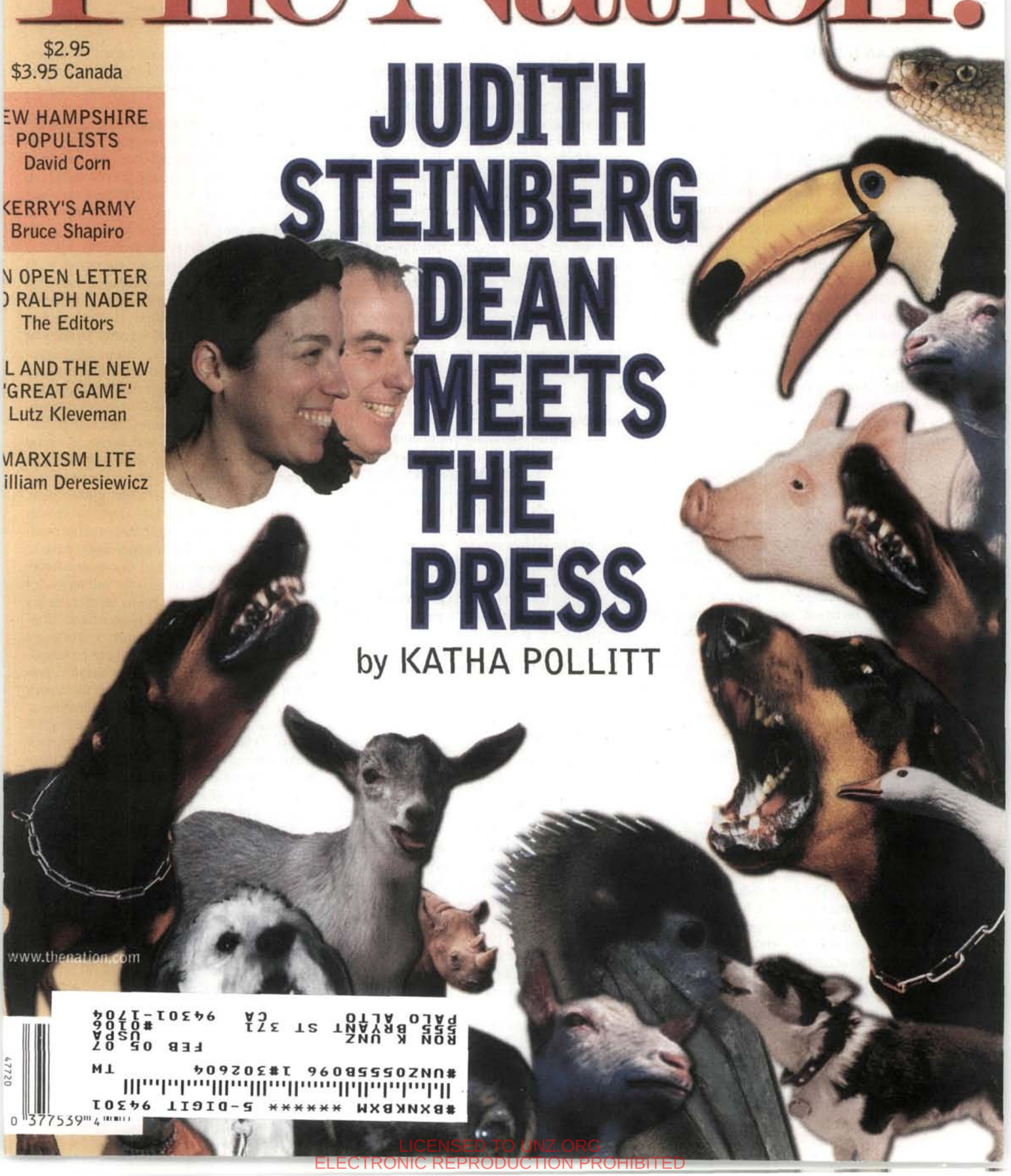
JUDITH STEINBERG DEAN MEETS THE PRESS

by KATHA POLLITT



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LETTERS

R.O. BLECHMAN

AMERICAN HUBRIS AND HISTORY

Brunswick, Me.

■ Robert Jay Lifton, in "American Apocalypse" [Dec. 22], brilliantly articulates the psychic and political errors of our current policies—that omnipotence creates insecurity and that military occupation breeds precisely the terrorism it is meant to extirpate. In a Sophoclean or Shakespearean drama such hubris would bring disaster, as it may yet in the less tidy space of history. Is there not, though, a benefit? Our military overcommitment may force us to accept a diplomatic solution to the issue of North Korean nuclear arms, which we could have had two years ago had Bush not needed another rogue nation to fill out his "axis of evil." Furthermore, the misadventure in Iraq may cause future leaders to hesitate in the face of "military solutions," as did the debacle in Vietnam until recently. On the other hand, our overreaching this time will be more difficult to resolve than it was in Vietnam. There, at least, we always had someone with whom to negotiate "peace with honor."

H.R. COURSEN

Vershire, Vt.

■ Like so many others, Robert Jay Lifton describes the "superpower syndrome" in most of its aspects but neglects to mention the economic advantages of a permanent war economy. Without the riches obtained from the cold war and now the "war on terror," would there be need for an American Apocalypse? The fact that the Carlyle Group chose to concentrate its funds in defense companies and the revolving door between the Pentagon and the arms industry surely is an indicator of the reason for keeping the American people in a continuous state of fear. Until profit is taken out of war, we will never have a world at peace.

VALERIE MULLEN

Poughkeepsie, NY

■ Robert Jay Lifton compares the "fanaticism" of the "Islamist zealots" with the "superpower syndrome" of the US "infinite war fever" leadership. "Superpower syndrome" is essentially a psychological interpretation, thus missing the political element: The drive to endless war and the use of military power to intimidate other nations while developing superpatriotism and loss of liberties at home—incarcerating people without charge or defense and creating an imaginary enemy, scapegoat and object of derision in Islam, as Hitler did the Jewish people—are all elements of fascism.

ARTHUR M. PIERSON

Phoenix

■ Robert Jay Lifton makes it sound as though George W. Bush's foreign policy of an imperial America based on unilateral decisions and the abrogation of treaties that don't suit him is an aberration. It is not. It is the continuation of a foreign policy started by Thomas Jefferson when he made the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and that reached its peak in the 1840s during the Mexican War. This policy, Manifest Destiny, was endorsed by most of the clergy, who claimed that it was God's will for the United States to spread Christianity; the business community, who wanted more sources of raw materials and markets for manufactured products; the Southern states, which wanted more slave states; and American jingoists. And the westward movement did not stop at the shores of California. But in those days weapons that could destroy civilization and the human species did not exist. Unfortunately, that is not true today, and our President either does not understand or does not care. He is trying to continue Manifest Destiny.

ZACHARY WINOGRAD

North Haven, Conn.

■ Hats off for publishing commentaries that approach the sobering notion of American parallels with fascism. Many Americans see themselves as a superior "folk," with character that transcends others', a "manifest destiny" and a claim to special privileges. I am suspicious of Lifton's phrase that "we can do better" using "our considerable power and influence in the world." Perhaps there is in this another sobering notion: that the world does not need us. It does not need "our" arrogance, it does not need "our" power, it does not need "our" leadership, and the quicker we are able to confront all the fascist myths of "divine nationhood" the quicker we will be able to fight the growing menace of empire.

C.W. BROWN

LIFTON REPLIES

Cambridge, Mass.

■ Many Americans disapprove of the Bush Administration's belligerent policies, but few are aware of its extremism, its totalism. I used the medical metaphor "superpower syndrome" as the title of my book to suggest that these extreme policies are psychologically of a piece: part of an overall constellation that includes a sense of omnipotence and aspiration toward what I call "fluid world control." The approach is essentially psychological (or "psychohistorical"), as Arthur Pierson states, but is meant to shed light on political and military behavior and on the motivations behind that behavior. I believe that we need such an approach if we are to grasp the larger significance and radical threat posed by these policies. To invoke the term *fascism* can be tempting but does not capture the complexities of the American "syndrome."

Valerie Mullen is right to stress the importance of corporate economic gain. It is precisely the ideology of world control that renders the war on terrorism and its economic arrangements "permanent."

I also agree with Zachary Winograd's observation that Bush Administration policies connect with prior US imperial impulses combining visionary ideology, economic interest and claim to divine purpose. But we underestimate our problem if we fail to recognize its new and special features. These have to do with an all-encompassing ideology and technology joined in an active project to remake the world. Bush has suggested the apocalyptic dimensions of that project in his repeated emphasis on eliminating evil, and its necessary military dominance was made clear in the National Security Strategy of September 2002. Nor have previous administrations had access to the kind of international communications technology that can encourage visions of world control. Added to this contemporary mix is the very real existence of globalized Islamist terrorism, which serves as a prod to American excess in an endless dynamic of mutual killing and apocalyptic danger. Overall, then, this Administration is indeed an aberration.

H.R. Coursen suggests that the consequences of our hubris might lead to some benefit, that military overcommitment could force us to engage in diplomacy and discourage future leaders from embarking on new "military solutions." I would add that even our present leaders are capable of moments of pragmatism, of responding to realities that resist fantasies of world domination. But the pragmatism can be temporary and strategic. Consider the President's stress in his State of the Union speech on diplomacy backed by "credibility," meaning willingness to carry out threats to invade and force regime change. (The word has a special ring to veterans of the antinuclear movement, who well remember the principle of "deterrence with credibility," meaning willingness under certain circumstances to blow up the world.)

Coursen is pointing to the vulnerability of the ostensibly omnipotent superpower, but he and the other letter-writers are undoubtedly aware of the intense political work that is necessary to remove from office those who so actively promote the superpower syndrome. Doing so requires calling forth alternative American traditions, which is what I mean when I say that "we can do better." I understand C.W. Brown's discomfort with the "we" in that statement or the equivalent "our," given the frequency with which these identity pronouns are associated with US arrogance and even fascist-like myths of divine nationhood. The difficulty is that, whatever our opposition to its policies, he and I

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EDITORIALS

Accountability on WMDs

As an MSNBC analyst before the war, former United Nations weapons inspector David Kay often seemed more like a cheerleader for the Bush Administration's Iraq policy than he did an impartial expert on Iraq's weapons programs. So it was not surprising that the White House tapped him last summer to lead the effort to locate such weapons.

Now, seven months later, Kay has resigned, concluding that Iraq had no active nuclear weapons program and possessed no biological or chemical weapons. "I don't think they existed," he said of the latter in a Reuters interview, explaining that they were eliminated in the mid-1990s by UN inspectors and by Iraq itself, and that there were no significant efforts to make new ones.

The justification used by Kay and other weapons experts who supported the US case a year ago is that even the UN inspectors believed Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. But in fact, chief inspector Hans Blix went out of his way before the war to say that the UN inspectors did not know whether Iraq still had proscribed weapons.

Faced with new revelations about the lack of WMD, the Administration at first simply repeated its earlier allegations. As Kay was preparing to announce his resignation, NPR aired an interview with Vice President Cheney in which he continued to deceive and dissemble: "We still don't know the whole extent of what [the Iraqis] did have. It's going to take some additional, considerable period of time in order to look in all the cubbyholes and ammo dumps and all the places in Iraq where you'd expect to find something like that"—this despite the fact that Kay's replacement had already said that he believed the chances of finding chemical or biological weapons in Iraq are now "close to nil." Cheney, never one to let truth interfere with ideologically driven beliefs, also insisted that semi-trailers found in Iraq were "conclusive evidence" that Saddam "did in fact have programs for weapons of mass destruction." Kay had earlier told the *New York Times* that the trailer assertions were an embarrassing fiasco.

When such tactics failed to quell rising questions, the White House moved to refine its dissembling strategy, promising to look into what went wrong with the intelligence-gathering process but only after the Iraq Survey Group has completed its work at some unspecified time in the future, most likely after the November election. In pursuing such delaying tactics, the Administration seems to be more interested in covering up its lies and deceptions than it is in American national security.

Democrats in Congress are correct to call for an independent commission to study the critical failure in our intelligence community, but even more important is an investigation into the White House's systematic abuse of the facts and the intelligence process. In today's hyper-interdependent world, our national security depends on the cooperation of other nations. It is not reasonable to expect these nations to act with us if they have doubts about the quality of our intelligence or must constantly question the hidden motives behind our foreign policy decisions.

As Representative Jane Harman of California, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said after Kay's resignation, "The potential threat posed by Iraq's stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons and Iraq's nuclear weapons program was central to the case for war. In light of Dr. Kay's statement, the President owes the American public and the world an explanation."

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COMMENT

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New Hampshire Populists

ELECTION MATTERS

Howard Dean has won the war but lost another battle. In New Hampshire—where Senator John Kerry racked up his second straight win, with 39 percent, Dean placed a not-so-encouraging second, at 26 percent, and Senator John Edwards and retired Gen. Wesley Clark both received an unimpressive 12 percent—the leading contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination all ran as Dean-like crusaders, vowing to vanquish Washington special interests. Kerry said he would "stand up" to the special interests. Edwards spoke eloquently of "two Americas"—one where the wealthy receive quality healthcare and education and pocket most of the tax cuts; and another where corporations screw middle- and low-income families who have trouble paying their bills, saving money and obtaining decent education for their kids. Clark argued that as an outsider, not a politician, he would be able to "represent the American people, not pharmaceutical companies."

In politics, swiping issues is a form of flattery. So Dean should feel complimented, small consolation as that may be. His "take back America" campaign—which he claimed was enlisting citizens in a grassroots effort to challenge the money-and-power ways of Washington—not only inspired hundreds of thousands of people to donate and volunteer but also persuaded Dean's rivals that anti-special-interests populism was the ticket to the White House, or at least the Democratic nomination. When Kerry seemed in trouble at the end of last year, he started selling himself as "The Real Deal," ready to confront the powerful interests. Weeks before the Iowa caucuses, Edwards honed his "two Americas" routine, which became the best speech of the race. By election day, few thematic or policy differences existed among the four leading candidates. They could all say, "I am a Howard Dean Democrat." That was not so, though, for back-of-the-packers Senator Joseph Lieberman and Representative Dennis Kucinich. Lieberman, who could give a speech on healthcare and not mention insurance companies or HMOs, polled 9 percent. And Kucinich, whose radical populism includes a call for a universal, not-for-profit, single-payer healthcare system, netted a measly 2 percent.

Dean has yet to persuade a plurality of voters that he is the appropriate person to carry the message he injected into the 2004 campaign. In New Hampshire, he tried hard to refurbish his image, presenting himself as a blend of two late Democrats, Paul Tsongas and Paul Wellstone. Tsongas, who hailed from Massachusetts, won the New Hampshire primary in 1992 as a self-proclaimed straight shooter who accused Bill Clinton and others of pandering by promising tax cuts when the deficit was a problem. In New Hampshire, Dean maintained that Democrats must not overpromise—meaning they have to acknowledge that tax cuts and additional programs must wait until the budget is balanced (with the exception of his favorites: expanded health coverage, early childhood intervention and a renewable-energy initiative). Dean also continued to expound the people-have-the-power faith and you'll-always-know-where-I-stand attitude of Wellstone, as he pointed to his own early opposition to the war and characterized his campaign as an organizing vehicle for voters seeking to bring public-

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An Open Letter to Ralph Nader

Dear Ralph,

According to the latest news reports, you've pushed up your self-imposed deadline for announcing your decision about an independent 2004 presidential campaign from the end of January to mid-February. We're glad to hear that, because maybe it means you're still not sure about the best path to follow. For the good of the country, the many causes you've championed and for your own good name—don't run for President this year.

Ralph, you've been part of the *Nation* family for a long time, from the day in 1959 we published one of your first articles, the exposé of "The Safe Car You Can't Buy." Since then, you've been a consistent advocate for active citizenship, investigative scholarship and environmental stewardship. It wasn't hype when we called you Public Citizen Number One.

We know you've never been one to back down from a fight. When people tell you you can't do something, if you think it's the right thing to do, you do it anyway. That stubborn devotion to principle is one of your greatest strengths. It inspired a generation of Nader's Raiders in the 1960s and '70s, it helped produce notable victories like the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety & Health Administration, and it inspired a new generation of young people who flocked to your "super rallies" in 2000. The issues you raise on your website, NaderExplore04.org—full public financing of elections, new tools to help citizens band together, ending poverty, universal healthcare, a living wage, a crackdown on corporate crime—are vital to the long-term health of our country. When those issues are given scant attention by major-party candidates and ignored or trivialized by the sham joint candidate appearances known as presidential debates, we join in your outrage.

But when devotion to principle collides with electoral politics, hard truths must be faced. Ralph, this is the wrong year for you to run: 2004 is not 2000. George W. Bush has led us into an illegal pre-emptive war, and his defeat is critical. Moreover, the odds of this becoming a race between Bush and Bush Lite are almost nil. For a variety of reasons—opposition to the war, Bush's assault on the Constitution, his crony capitalism, frustration with the overcautious and indentured approach of inside-the-Beltway Democrats—there is a level of passionate volunteerism at the grassroots of the Democratic Party not seen since 1968.

The context for an independent presidential bid is completely altered from 2000, when there was a real base for a protest candidate. The overwhelming mass of voters with progressive values—who are essential to all efforts to build a force that can change the direction of the country—have only one focus this year: to beat Bush. Any candidacy seen as distracting from that goal will be excoriated by the entire spectrum of potentially progressive voters. If you run, you will separate yourself, probably irrevocably, from any ongoing relationship with this energized mass of activists. Look around: Almost no one, including former strong supporters, is calling for you to run, compared with past years when many veteran organizers urged you on.

If you run, your efforts to raise neglected issues will hit a deafening headwind. The media will frame you as The Spoiler. It's also safe to predict that you will get far fewer votes than the 2.8 million you garnered in 2000, and not only because your rejection of the Green Party raises expensive new hurdles to getting your name on state ballots. A recent online survey by the progressive news site AlterNet.org found that only one in nine respondents said they'd vote for you if you run this year, a 60 percent drop-off from the number who said they voted for you in 2000. If you run and get a million votes or fewer, the media will say it means your issues were not important. This can only hurt those causes, not to mention the tangible costs another run may impose on the many public-interest groups tied to you.

You have said your candidacy could actually help Democrats by raising issues against Bush that a Democratic candidate would avoid and by boosting turnout for good candidates for the House and Senate, where the slender bulwarks against Bushism must be reinforced. But these arguments do not compel a candidacy by you. As a public citizen fighting for open debates and rallying voters to support progressive Democrats for Congress, or good independents or Greens for that matter, you can have a far more productive impact than as a candidate dealing with recriminations about being a spoiler or, worse, an egotist. And the very progressives distressed by the prospect of your candidacy would contribute eagerly to have that voice amplified.

And if you think that this year you can help the anti-Bush cause by running and peeling off disgruntled Republicans, McCainiacs, Perotistas and the like while not disrupting the Democratic charge, please be honest with yourself. Once upon a time, maybe as late as 1992, when you dallied with a "none of the above" campaign and got 2 percent of the vote in New Hampshire from write-ins in both the Democratic and Republican primaries, your appeal stretched across the political spectrum. No longer, alas. Your nephew, Tarek Milleron, wrote recently that if you run in 2004 it will be "the year of the Elks clubs, the garden clubs, meetings with former Enron employees, the veterans groups, Wal-Mart employees," not progressive super rallies. But how many Elks club presidents are inviting you to speak? How many veterans groups? Such relationships take time to build and can't be conjured out of thin air in the midst of a presidential campaign.

You once told us you play chess at many levels at once. For all we know, you're thinking of running hard and then, if the race is close, throwing your support to the Democrat in the final days. While such a tactic might make for a satisfying conclusion to an otherwise futile quest, we don't think it justifies the risks, antagonism, confusion and contortions that such a run would entail.

Ralph, please think of the long term. Don't run.

Sincerely,
The Editors

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COMMENT

interest democracy to Washington. Kerry told voters, "I will fight for you." Edwards told them, "I believe in you." Dean said, "I don't want people to believe in me. I want you to believe in yourselves." His campaign had more "we" in it than the others. He effectively joked about the "Scream Heard Around the World"—which might remain the deal killer for Dean—and he focused more attention on his record of providing medical insurance to the uninsured of Vermont. If there are second acts in American politics, Dean positioned himself as best he could for a revival.

But New Hampshire left him hanging. As his campaign aides noted (desperately?) on election night, Dean did finish eight or so points higher than his recent lows in the polls. But had he hit a natural ceiling, demonstrating that his hard-edged, boot-the-bums campaign has limited appeal? For his part, Kerry, usually a lackluster campaigner, improved in the last days. He loosened up and engaged more effectively with the crowds. He seemed happy. ("That's always been tough for him," one of his aides said.) He articulated a strong case against Bush, questioning whether Bush could claim "mission accomplished" on jobs, healthcare and education, and he slammed the President for overseeing the "most arrogant, inept, reckless and most ideological foreign policy" in years. With his Vietnam buddies ever nearby, the former war hero argued that the Democrats needed a nominee with recognizable national security experience. He was a safe choice, more conventionally electable than Dean.

As soon as Kerry's victory was sealed, his aides asserted that Dean was done. But the night before the election, Dean campaign manager Joe Trippi laid out the strategy for a never-say-die campaign. Trippi has since been replaced by—get this—former telecom lobbyist and Gore aide Roy Neel. But Trippi's view was that no one in this field can yet sustain a lead. The voters perceive weaknesses in each. As one or another rises to the top of the pack, Democratic voters respond by slapping them back into place. It happened to Dean. Now, Trippi predicted, it will happen to Kerry. Maybe Edwards will be next. Consequently, the race will continue for several weeks—despite pleas from party HQ for candidates to drop out—until it is a two- or three-person race. By then, none of the campaigns will have the vast amount of money required to advertise effectively in large states like California and New York. At that point the face-off will turn on which campaign can mount the best low-budget endeavor and which candidate can thrive in an environment dominated by debates and media coverage. In this phase, Trippi said, Dean will hammer Kerry for his vote granting Bush the authority to invade Iraq and for being part of a Congress that (unlike Dean) failed to deliver on healthcare coverage. Trippi maintained that Dean's band of passionate staffers and volunteers would be the campaign most able to revert to "in the weeds" status.

A likely scenario? Does Neel even buy this? Perhaps Kerry will succeed with the strategy once embraced by Deaniacs: Win the first two bouts, survive the inevitable incoming attacks and steamroll the opposition. But there are more Kerry-Dean battles to come, and they could stretch out over several weeks—or longer. And as the race enters a pell-mell period with primaries occurring across the nation, Edwards and Clark will finally have shots in Southern and Western states. After New Hampshire, one anti-special-interests Democrat is in a commanding (but still early) lead, and several other anti-special-interests Democrats have reasons to stay in the hunt. But if Dean is to have a chance of supplanting Kerry as his party's messenger-in-chief—a large if—his campaign, often described as insurgent, may well have to reach a new and even more intense level of insurgency. DAVID CORN

CALVIN TRILLIN

A Response From Cloud Cuckoo Land to David Kay's Departing, Weaponless

They'd said that David Kay would list
The weapons that the UN missed.
Now David Kay tells Bush and Blair
The weapons simply were not there.
And Cheney, who'd displayed no doubt?
He still says that the jury's out.
It certainly's not out on him.
It's in on him and looking grim.
Yes, perjury remains the charge;
He's guilty, though he's still at large.

Kerry's Army

Manchester, New Hampshire

John Kerry kept a bodyguard beside him at his town meeting in Somersworth, a working-class hamlet near the Maine border, two days before the primary. At least it appeared he had: The granite-jawed, gimlet-eyed face beneath the VFW hat festooned with unit badges looked ready in an instant to swing a mean left hook. But Kerry's shadow man had only one arm and no legs. It was Max Cleland, former senator from Georgia, triply maimed by combat wounds in Vietnam. From his wheelchair at Kerry's side throughout the ninety-minute question-and-answer session, Cleland maintained the unblinking gaze of a combat soldier on night watch—a silent dare to any antagonist.

Other Vietnam-era vets have run for President—John McCain in 2000, Wesley Clark this year. And every Democratic candidate shouts out that the Bush Administration has abandoned veterans even in the midst of war, from cutbacks in medical eligibility to loss of overtime pay.

Somehow Kerry's candidacy and his veterans operation are different. Written off only a few weeks ago as heir to Gore's Herman Munster stiffness, Kerry has—at least in two states—aroused a hidden constituency of people who see him as a loyal comrade who honors with stubborn memory the horrors they lived, in

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COMMENT

Southeast Asia and back home. Far more than Clark, Kerry—despite his elite family background—reflects the psychic rip still felt by many vets: the bonds forged by military service combined with a still-unhealed sense of betrayal by bad leadership in a bad cause. He is both the decorated battle veteran and the leader of veterans who threw their decorations back on the steps of the Capitol.

Kerry seems singularly committed to portraying himself not as a solitary hero but as part of a cohort. Everywhere he goes his advance party includes a phalanx of Vietnam vets: sometimes his friend Cleland; sometimes the graying, still passionately loyal crew of his Mekong Delta fast-attack boat; and nearly always since Iowa, the former Green Beret Kerry rescued thirty-five years ago who brought himself to the campaign days before the Iowa caucus.

"In 1971 John Kerry was saying the things I wanted so badly to say," says Bill Doyle, now retired after a career as a Boston public high school teacher but thirty-three years ago newly returned from two years in the Army. In 1982 Doyle volunteered in Kerry's first run for lieutenant governor, and this year, as a veterans outreach staffer, he is helping turn other Vietnam vets out for Kerry's presidential campaign.

Vietnam-era veterans are, in theory, a formidable voting bloc of 8.4 million, not to mention their families. Counting on them, though, is a high-risk strategy. "These are often veterans who felt left out, who haven't registered to vote, who felt badly used by politicians," Cleland said after the Somersworth meeting. "They don't show up in polling." For some, their capacity to trust was permanently undermined by combat trauma. Many, points out Doyle, were shunned by VFW and American Legion posts and have never reconnected to national veterans organizations.

The Kerry campaign has responded with an innovative strategy reaching back to the Vietnam veterans movement's roots in GI coffeehouses and discussion groups: In twenty-six states his field operation has established direct veteran-to-veteran outreach, insulated from conventional phone-banking and the rest of the campaign staff.

Is Kerry bringing Vietnam veterans in from the cold? In Davenport, Iowa, I observed one caucus where the results were startling and suggestive: Vets and their families made up two-thirds of newly registered Democrats, who gave Kerry a lopsided margin over all competitors. Statewide, veterans were credited with aiding his unexpectedly strong first-place finish. In New Hampshire, Clark and Kerry both routinely asked veterans in their audiences to raise their hands; at the Clark events I attended vets were always present but few in number, and often turned out to be from out of state. At Kerry's they generally numbered in the dozens and were more likely to be local—perhaps an indication that for Vietnam vets, or vets generally, a lieutenant who came to despise the war has more credibility than a career general who never spoke out.

It's important not to oversimplify the veteran vote—as Kerry's defiant friend Cleland, defeated in 2002 after attacks on his patriotism, can testify. And all the veteran support will mean nothing if Kerry retreats into the caution and ambivalence of his vote on Iraq. But beyond Kerry's career prospects—or even the bulletproofing of Democrats against attack from the right—there are reasons to take note of Vietnam vets emerging into national political life. For many, the war in Vietnam remains a source of grief and alienation. And the war in Iraq—initiated amid Tonkin-scale disinformation, celebrated by a President who dodged Vietnam combat service, now requiring thousands of troops to fight an endless counter-insurgency—rouses many of those emotions anew. For or against the Vietnam War, for or against the invasion of Iraq, Vietnam vets still carry that memory of personal and moral betrayal. In movies and television they are still portrayed as Rambos, mercenaries, head cases, even as they approach retirement in the face of declining benefits. Kerry's candidacy offers the possibility of a national leader who's a Vietnam veteran bearing all the ambiguities of his generation. Could Vietnam veterans and their families tip a presidential race? Contemplate this: The most frequently visited monument in Washington is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

BRUCE SHAPIRO

Bruce Shapiro's latest book is Shaking the Foundations: 200 Years of Investigative Journalism in America *(Nation Books).*

India Hosts the World

Mumbai, India

To the beat of drums by India's Dalits (former Untouchables) and Adivasis (forest-dwelling tribes) celebrating indigenous popular movements that refuse to be subdued, the World Social Forum opened in Mumbai. Nagas and Meiteis from India's Northeast and Bhils and Nimadis from the Narmada Valley joined hands with Dalits from the south and rubbed shoulders with about 100,000 people from 132 countries. This year's forum was the largest gathering since the WSF was set up in 2001, and the first outside Brazil. Even India—perhaps the world's greatest reservoir of ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural plurality—had never before witnessed anything like this magnificent interaction of diverse ideas and constituencies.

There were peace campaigners and labor unionists from the Arab world, feminists and sexual rights activists from Pakistan, refugee rights defenders and ad-busters from Western Europe, anticorporate campaigners and grassroots environmentalists from North America, artists and citizen weapons-inspectors from Central Europe, indigenous rights activists and media-freedom campaigners from Africa, and secularists working against politicized religion from around the world. The forum featured celebrities like Arundhati Roy, Nobel Peace laureate Shirin Ebadi and former World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz; people's activists like France's McDonald's-buster José Bové and Ecuador's indigenous leader Blanca Chancoso; political leaders like Palestine's Mustafa Barghouthi and Britain's Jeremy Corbyn; and performers like Pakistan's Junoon band and Brazil's musician-minister Gilberto Gil. More important were the ordinary citizens who formed the forum's majority.

The first World Social Forum to be held since the US invasion of Iraq, the Mumbai event focused sharply on militarism, empire and peace, and on the many crises aggravated by the "war on terrorism." The largest cluster of events was devoted to these themes, as were some of the best attended of the 1,200-plus conferences, seminars and workshops held in an abandoned textile factory.

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COMMENT

(This was a sad reminder of the closure of the city's once-huge textile industry and the mills' conversion into glitzy shopping malls, which have become a craze among India's upper crust. India's rapid economic growth has brought wealth to the elite and unemployment and near-collapse of public services to the majority.)

Speakers from countries as diverse as the United States, Israel, South Africa, Indonesia and Italy were unanimous that the occupation of Iraq is grossly unjust, profoundly destabilizing global security, and should be ended forthwith. The issue figured prominently in discussions involving groups like United for Peace and Justice (United States) and the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (India). It was highlighted at the inaugural and concluding plenaries, where speakers, including India's former President K.R. Narayanan and former Prime Minister V.P. Singh, Iraq's Abdul Amir Al-Rekabi and Brazil's Chico Whitaker, described the "war on terrorism" as an attempt to demonize Islam and establish US hegemony. This war is producing explosive discontent in West and South Asia, with unpredictable consequences.

The forum's numerous sessions on the Israel-Palestine conflict emphatically demanded Israel's immediate withdrawal from the occupied territories. Many speakers praised the Geneva Accord as a useful civil society intervention, but criticized it for its compromises, such as jettisoning Palestinian refugees' right of return and imposing unequal obligations regarding disarmament on Israel and Palestine.

Prominent among the topics at other WSF clusters of events were: corporate intrusion into water, forest and plant biodiversity; discrimination against women (e.g., through embryo sex detection and female feticide in Asia); ethnicity- and religion-based politics; Dalit and Adivasi struggles for dignity; land, water and food sovereignty; and media, culture and knowledge.

The forum provided a unique opportunity for Pakistani activists—an unprecedented 650 of whom attended, despite serious visa problems—to interact with Indians and jointly evaluate the recently begun state-level dialogue process and plan initiatives to push it forward. They held free and frank discussions on Kashmir and put its people, not the Indian and Pakistani states, at the center of the conflict's resolution.

Of the two categories of people at Mumbai, those concerned

(Continued on Page 22)

In Fact . . .

WHAT ASSASSINATION PLOT?

■ Scott Sherman writes: A few weeks ago, *Slate* asked a number of "liberal hawks"—among them George Packer, Kenneth Pollack, Thomas Friedman, Paul Berman and Fareed Zakaria — to reflect on their support for the Iraq war [see Eric Alterman, page 10]. For several days, *Slate* readers witnessed a steady stream of linguistic acrobatics, graceful, guilt-ridden prose and, in some cases, genuine contrition. But if contributors like Pollack and *Slate* editor Jacob Weisberg expressed deep misgivings about their initial support for military intervention, they accepted Administration claims that, in Weisberg's words, "Saddam tried to assassinate former President Bush." Weisberg and Pollack echoed what Bush himself said of Saddam in 2002: "This is a guy that tried to kill my dad." Is Saddam guilty as charged? Backtrack to spring 1993, when the Clinton Administration announced that Iraqi intelligence had attempted to assassinate George Bush Sr. with a car bomb during a ceremonial visit to Kuwait. In retaliation Clinton ordered a missile attack on Baghdad, which killed eight civilians. Our knowledge of the plot against Bush might have ended there if not for the efforts of Seymour Hersh, who revisited the episode in a lengthy piece for *The New Yorker* in November 1993. After numerous interviews with high-ranking US and Kuwaiti officials, along with electrical engineers and bomb experts, Hersh concluded that the key suspects in the plot were beaten (and possibly tortured) by Kuwaiti authorities, and that "there is no evidence that any of the alleged assassins took any overt steps to deploy any bombs." In February 2003, in a little-noticed article, the *Baltimore Sun* disclosed that "the former FBI chemist who tested the explosive recovered in Kuwait says he told superiors it did not match known Iraqi explosives"—a fact that does much to bolster Hersh's reporting. Do Weisberg and Pollack know something Hersh doesn't? One can only speculate, since they didn't return phone calls.

SUPER CENSORSHIP BOWL

■ John Nichols writes: This year's Super Bowl was set to feature the usual clash of football teams and the clash of rival beer company claims during the advertising breaks. But the clash of ideas was censored. CBS refused to permit the MoveOn.org Voter Fund to buy time during the game for a commercial criticizing the Bush deficit. (The spot shows children working at adult jobs with the tag line "Guess who's going to pay off President Bush's $1 trillion deficit?") The network said the ad was too "controversial" for Super Bowl showing. Pointing to the network's willingness to accept Super Bowl ads for beer, R-rated movies and Bob Dole's solution to erectile dysfunction, MoveOn asked why a thirty-second reflection on deficit spending was too controversial for public consumption. CBS's warped definition of "controversial" speech, and the network's willingness to use that definition to justify censorship even of mainstream ideas, highlights the danger of allowing any one network to get too big. Viacom, the company that owns CBS, has been at the forefront of lobbying to ease limits on media consolidation and monopoly. And the Bush Administration, which CBS is now protecting from criticism, went to the mat to defend the Federal Communications Commission decision to rewrite rules to favor the big media corporations like Viacom. With its censorship of the MoveOn ad during the highly viewed Super Bowl game, CBS proves that dissident FCC commissioner Michael Copps was right when he said, "Diversity in advertising, just like diversity of viewpoint, depends on diversity of ownership." (To learn more about the CBS decision and the fight against media monopoly, visit www.mediareform.net.)

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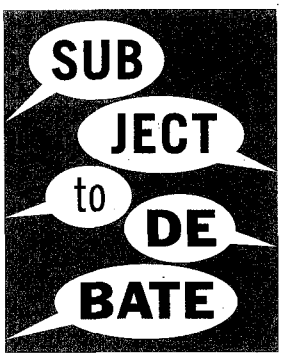
KATHA POLLITT

Judy, Judy, Judy

I used to think we should get rid of First Ladies. Plenty of countries manage without a national wife: Cherie Blair aside (and how long would Britain's answer to Hillary have lasted over here?), can you name the spouse of the man who leads France, Germany, China, Canada or Russia? And no, "Mrs. Putin" doesn't count as a correct answer. Is Lula married? What about Ariel Sharon? Is there a Mrs. General Musharraf ready with a nice cup of tea when her man comes home after walking the nuclear weapons? Do you care? The ongoing public inquest into Dr. Judith Steinberg makes me see, however, that we need First Ladies: Without them, American women might actually believe that they are liberated, that modern marriage is an equal partnership, that the work they are trained for and paid to do is important whether or not they are married, and that it is socially acceptable for adult women in the year 2004 to possess distinct personalities—even quirks! Without First Ladies, a woman might imagine that whether she keeps or changes her name is a private, personal choice, the way the young post-post-feminists always insist it is when they write those annoying articles explaining why they are now calling themselves Mrs. My Husband.



The attack on Dr. Judy began on the front page of the *New York Times* (you know, the ultraliberal paper) with a January 13 feature by Jodi Wilgoren, full of catty remarks about her "sensible slipper flats and no makeup or earrings" and fatuous observations from such academic eminences as Myra Gutin, "who has taught a course on first ladies at Rider University in New Jersey for 20 years." It seems that Dr. Steinberg "fits nowhere" in Professor Gutin's categorizations. Given that she counts Pat Nixon as an "emerging spokeswoman," maybe that's not such a bad thing. "The doctors Dean seem to be in need of some tips on togetherness and building a healthy political marriage," opined Maureen Dowd, a single woman who, even if she weds tomorrow, will be in a nursing home by the time she's been married for twenty-three years like the Deans. Tina Brown, another goddess of the hearth, compared Dr. Judy to mad Mrs. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. On ABC News's *Primetime*, Diane Sawyer put both Deans on the grill, with, according to Alexander Stille, who counted for the *LA Times*, ninety negative questions out of a total of ninety-six. Blinking and nodding like a kindly nurse coaxing a lunatic off a window ledge, Sawyer acted as if she wanted to understand Dr. Judy's bizarre behavior: She keeps her maiden name professionally (just like, um, Diane Sawyer, *a k a* Mrs. Mike Nichols); she doesn't follow the day-to-day of politics (like, what, 90 percent of Americans?); she *enjoyed* getting a rhododendron from Howard for her birthday. Throughout this sexist inquisition, Dr. Steinberg remained as gentle as a fawn, polite and unassuming—herself. "I'm not a very 'thing' person," she said when Sawyer pressed too close on that all-important rhododendron. She allowed as how she was not too interested in clothes—whereupon Sawyer cut to a photo of Laura Bush, smiling placidly in a red ball gown.

I don't think Dr. Judy is weird at all. She's leading a normal, modern, middle-class-professional life. She has been married forever. She has two children. She likes camping and bike riding and picnics. She volunteers. She has work she loves, as a community physician—not, you'll note, as a cold-hearted status-obsessed selfish careerist user, as professional women are always accused of being. (Let's also note that she is not someone who was ever, even once, during her husband's twelve-year stint as governor of Vermont, accused of using her marriage to advance a friend or enrich herself or obtain special perks and privileges.) And here's another secret: Not too many women in long marriages want to spend their lives gazing rapturously at their husband for the benefit of the camera every time he opens his mouth. Vermonters liked Judy Dean—they had no problem with her low-key, independent style. But, then, if you listen to the press, you know Vermonters—they're weird, too.

I have no idea why Judith Steinberg hasn't slogged through the snow for her husband. Maybe she's nervous in public. Maybe she's busy. ("It's not something I can say, 'Oh, you take over for a month,'" she explained to Diane Sawyer. Imagine that, Tina, Diane, Maureen—a job where if you don't show up, it matters!) Maybe, like lots of Democrats, she's waiting to see if the Dean campaign has legs. It's possible she and her husband didn't understand they had left the real world for Mediaville, where it's always 1955, and thought it was no big deal if she kept working in Shelburne instead of being marched around Iowa in a power suit with a big bottle of Valium in her purse. Here's something I do know, though: Every day, this woman, about whom nobody who knows her has a mean word to say, gets up and does one of the most valuable things a human being can do on this earth: She takes care of sick people. Ordinary local people, not media princesses and princes. Is that the problem? If Judy Steinberg were a cosmetic surgeon or a diet doctor or held Botox parties after office hours, if her patients were famous, or the friends of the famous, if she could dish on the phone about Arnold Schwarzenegger and Martha Stewart, would the media cat pack think Judy Steinberg was cool?

Granted, rightly or wrongly, the media are going to take a look at the wives of the candidates, so you can argue that the Deans should have been prepared, especially given the media's dislike of Howard. This, after all, is the same media that managed to make a major scandal out of the Scream, a moment of campaign exuberance of zero importance (especially when compared with—for example!—Bush's inability to speak two consecutive unscripted sentences that are not gibberish, his refusal to read newspapers and the fact that much of the world thinks he's a dangerous moron). But actually, it's only when a wife has her own identity that her choices are scrutinized. If Dr. Judith Steinberg was simply Judy Dean, if she spent her life doing nothing so important it couldn't be dropped to follow her husband as he followed his star, no one would question her priorities. No one thought less of Barbara Bush because she dropped out of college to get married, like those

(Continued on Page 22)

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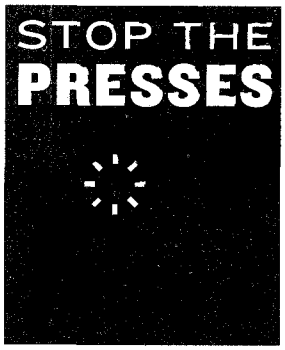
ERIC ALTERMAN

'Sorry' Seems to Be the Hardest Word



OK, Saddam's in jail and Iraq is the fifty-first (and best-funded) state. Are we better off than we were a year ago?

Slate's Jacob Weisberg asked a prominent group of "liberal hawks" to reassess their support for the war in light of what we now know. While he does not bring up issues relating to the Administration's morality or mendacity—not to mention the horrible precedent of the world's only superpower launching an allegedly "preventive" war—Weisberg offers a useful summary of what's gone wrong from a narrowly pragmatic point of view:

There is "the huge and growing cost of the invasion and occupation: in American lives (we're about to hit 500 dead and several thousand more have been injured); in money (more than $160 billion in borrowed funds); and in terms of lost opportunity (we might have found Osama Bin Laden by now if we'd committed some of those resources to Afghanistan). Most significant are the least tangible costs: increased hatred for the United States, which both fosters future terrorism and undermines the international support we will need to fight terrorism effectively for many years to come."

Of the group of eight, Kenneth Pollack, George Packer and Fred Kaplan have all come to regret their previous arguments to various degrees. Pollack, who is a bit equivocal on this point, lays responsibility on his own overestimation of the dictator's WMD capacity. Fair enough; this was something on which reasonable people could disagree, and as Paul Wolfowitz later admitted, was chosen by the Bush Administration as the focus of its propaganda efforts because of its perceived political potency. Kaplan (who changed his mind before the war began) and Packer lay the blame on the Administration's postwar incompetence, which, they believe, makes a mockery of the sacrifices it has demanded from this country and from the Iraqis themselves.

The "I'm Still a Hawk" club includes Thomas Friedman, Paul Berman, Christopher Hitchens and Fareed Zakaria. I think we can eliminate Hitchens from the ranks of prowar liberals at the start. As a leftist, he heaped Cockburn-like contempt on liberals; today it's more of the Horowitzian variety. In either incarnation, he has had little use for Isaiah Berlin or John Dewey. Neither does it make sense to include Fareed Zakaria, who is a protégé of the neoconservative Samuel Huntington (and, like Huntington, a critic of "too much democracy") and an unrepentant Reaganite. A smart conservative does not a liberal make.

My friend Paul Berman is as genuine a liberal as you will find anywhere, but his views on Iraq derive not from the logic of realist cost-benefit analysis but from his own metanarrative of the nature of the conflict between radical Islam and the West, laid out in his provocative book *Terror and Liberalism*. Paul may be right and I may be wrong, but in the meantime, given his analysis, it would be awfully difficult for him to consider the war a mistake no matter how badly the Administration screws it up. What he wants are better, more intelligent wars, but this war is better than nothing.

We are left, then, with Tom Friedman, America's most influential foreign affairs interlocutor, as the sole actual liberal in this group still defending his original cost-benefit analysis. He continues to concede the best of intentions to Bush & Co. vis-à-vis their alleged commitment to making Iraq a beacon of democracy, human rights and pluralism for the Arab world in order to destroy the "terrorism bubble" that has arisen in these sick societies. But despite his inclination to give the US side the benefit of every conceivable doubt—he refers to Administration lies as "hype"—Friedman cannot come up with any evidence that the people making policy in this Administration even take these concerns seriously. And therefore his oft-proclaimed optimism—a more accurate term might be "ahistorical naïveté"—leads him down a road to hell in which he is effectively shilling for a group of people who have in mind exactly the opposite of what he insists needs to take place in Iraq (see under "Lebanon" and "Vietnam").

Even if the Bush team cared a whit about the alleged objects of its ideological obsession, Iraq's reconstruction was always likely to be well beyond the capabilities of this Administration (or any administration), given the country's rampant factionalism, tribalism and various species of ideological radicalism. A successful Iraqi occupation was certain to be a far more daunting task than that of either Japan or Germany, both of which required years of careful planning and decades (at least) of US military involvement.

In light of Bush & Co.'s incompetent prewar planning, coupled with its arrogant unilateralist postwar mindset, it is awfully tempting for the disillusioned liberal hawks to contend that it did not give them the war they had been promised. (The founders of *The New Republic* made much the same argument about Wilson and World War I in 1919.) But as Weisberg points out, this escape hatch was nailed shut from the start. "This was elective surgery," he admits, "and we had a pretty good idea what the surgeon's limitations were. The choice wasn't between an invasion led by George W. Bush and an invasion led by a President who would make an eloquent case to the world and build a credible global coalition. The alternatives were Bush's flawed war or no war." If I might reach around to pat myself on the back, I offered this very reason for opposition as number seven in the eight reasons I gave in a prewar *Slate* symposium in February 2003. It read, "George Bush and the men surrounding him—Colin Powell excepted—are not honest men any more than Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon or Ronald Reagan were. The nation is still paying the price for its misplaced trust in those leaders in matters of war and peace."

To place one's trust in the honesty and good will of Bush & Co. is a far more grievous error than liberals made in 1964, because we have been to this movie before. But here we are again, with a costly and divisive guerrilla war on our hands and a dishonest bunch of incompetents telling us everything is going swimmingly. America is truly Groundhog Day Nation: insisting on our right to ignore our own history and forever condemned to repeat it. ■

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ARTICLES

OIL AND THE NEW 'GREAT GAME'

by LUTZ KLEVEMAN

About a year ago I visited the US air base in Bagram, some thirty miles north of the Afghan capital of Kabul. A US Army public affairs officer, a friendly Texan, gave me a tour of the sprawling camp, set up after the ouster of the Taliban in December 2001. It was a clear day, and one Chinook helicopter after the other took off to transport combat troops into the nearby mountains. As we walked past the endless rows of tents and men in desert camouflage uniforms, I spotted a wooden pole carrying two makeshift street signs. They read "Exxon Street" and "Petro Boulevard." Slightly embarrassed, the PA officer explained, "This is the fuel handlers' workplace. The signs are obviously a joke, a sort of irony."

As I am sure it was. It just seemed an uncanny sight, as I was researching the potential links between the "war on terror" and American oil interests in Central Asia. I had already traveled thousands of miles from the Caucasus peaks across the Caspian Sea and the Central Asian plains all the way down to the Afghan Hindu Kush. On that journey I met with and interviewed warlords, diplomats, politicians, generals and oil bosses. They are all players in a geostrategic struggle that has become increasingly intertwined with the war on terror: the new "Great Game."

In this rerun of the first "Great Game," the nineteenth-century imperial rivalry between the British Empire and czarist Russia, powerful players once again position themselves to control the heart of the Eurasian landmass, left in a post-Soviet power vacuum. Today the United States has taken over the leading role from the British. Along with the ever-present Russians, new regional powers such as China, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan have entered the arena, and transnational oil corporations are also pursuing their own interests in a brash, Wild East style.

Since September 11, 2001, the Bush Administration has undertaken a massive military buildup in Central Asia, deploying thousands of US troops not only in Afghanistan but also in the newly independent republics of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia. These first US combat troops on former Soviet territory have dramatically altered the geostrategic power equations in the region, with Washington trying to seal the cold war victory against Russia, contain Chinese influence and tighten the noose around Iran.

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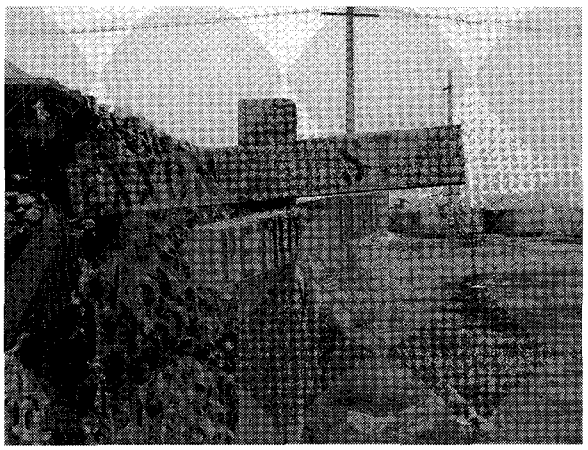
Most important, however, the Bush Administration is using the "war on terror" to further American energy interests in Central Asia. The bad news is that this dramatic geopolitical gamble involving thuggish dictators and corrupt Saudi oil sheiks is likely to produce only more terrorists, jeopardizing America's prospects of defeating the forces responsible for the September 11 attacks.

The main spoils in today's Great Game are the Caspian energy reserves, principally oil and gas. On its shores, and at the bottom of the Caspian Sea, lie the world's biggest untapped fossil fuel resources. Estimates range from 85 to 219 billion barrels of crude, worth up to $4 trillion. According to the US Energy Department, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan alone could sit on more than 110 billion barrels, more than three times the US reserves. Oil giants such as ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco and British Petroleum have already invested more than $30 billion in new production facilities.



The aggressive US pursuit of oil interests in the Caspian did not start with the Bush Administration but during the Clinton years, with the Democratic President personally conducting oil and pipeline diplomacy with Caspian leaders. Despite Clinton's failure to reduce the Russian influence in the region decisively, American industry leaders were impressed. "I cannot think of a time when we have had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian," declared Dick Cheney in 1998 in a speech to oil industrialists in Washington. Cheney was then still CEO of the oil-services giant Halliburton. In May 2001 Cheney, now US Vice President, recommended in the Administration's seminal National Energy Policy report that "the President make energy security a priority of our trade and foreign policy," singling out the Caspian Basin as a "rapidly growing new area of supply." Keen to outdo Clinton's oil record, the Bush Administration took the new Great Game into its second round.

With potential oil production of up to 4.7 million barrels per day by 2010, the Caspian region has become crucial to the US policy of "diversifying energy supply." The other major supplier is the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea, where both the Clinton and the Bush administrations have vigorously developed US oil interests and strengthened ties with corrupt West African regimes. The strategy of supply diversification, originally designed after the 1973 oil shock, is designed to wean America off its dependence on the Arab-dominated OPEC cartel, which has been using its near-monopoly position as pawn and leverage against industrialized countries. As global oil consumption keeps surging and many oil wells outside the Middle East are nearing depletion, OPEC is in the long run going to expand its share of the world market even further. At the same time, the United States will have to import more than two-thirds of its total energy needs by 2020, mostly from the volatile Middle East.

Many people in Washington are particularly uncomfortable with the growing power of Saudi Arabia, whose terror ties have been exposed since the September 11 terror attacks. As the recent bombings in Riyadh have shown, there is a growing risk that radical Islamist groups will topple the corrupt Saud dynasty, only to then stop the flow of oil to "infidels." The consequences of 8 million barrels of oil—10 percent of global production—disappearing from the world markets overnight would be disastrous. Even without any such anti-Western revolution, the Saudi petrol is already, as it were, ideologically contaminated. To stave off political turmoil, the regime in Riyadh funds the radical Islamic Wahhabi sect, many of whose preachers call for terror against Americans around the world.

To get out of its Faustian pact with Saudi Arabia, the United States has tried to reduce its dependence on Saudi oil sheiks by seeking to secure access to other sources. Central Asia, however, is no less volatile than the Middle East, and oil politics are only making matters worse: Fierce conflicts have broken out over pipeline routes from the landlocked Caspian region to high-sea ports. Russia, still regarding itself as the imperial overlord of its former colonies, promotes pipeline routes across its territory, notably Chechnya, in the North Caucasus. China, the increasingly oil-dependent waking giant in the region, wants to build eastbound pipelines from Kazakhstan. Iran is offering its pipeline network for exports via the Persian Gulf.

By contrast, both the Clinton and Bush administrations have championed two pipelines that would circumvent both Russia and Iran. One of them, first planned by the US oil company Unocal in the mid-1990s, would run from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to the Pakistani port of Gwadar on the Indian Ocean. Several months after the US-led overthrow of the Taliban regime, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, a former Unocal adviser, signed a treaty with Pakistani leader Pervez Musharraf and the Turkmen dictator Saparmurat Niyazov to authorize construction of a $3.2 billion gas pipeline through the Herat-Kandahar corridor in Afghanistan, with a projected capacity of about 1 trillion cubic feet of gas per year. A feasibility study is under way, and a parallel pipeline for oil is also planned for a later stage. So far, however, continuing warlordism in Afghanistan has prevented any private investor from coming forward.

Construction has already begun on a gigantic, $3.6 billion oil pipeline from Azerbaijan's capital of Baku via neighboring Georgia to Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. British Petroleum Amoco, its main operator, has invested billions in oil-rich Azerbaijan and can count on firm political support from the Bush Administration, which stationed about 500 elite troops in war-torn Georgia in May 2002. Controversial for environmental and social reasons, as it is unlikely to alleviate poverty in the notori-

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ously corrupt transit countries, the pipeline project also perpetuates instability in the South Caucasus. With thousands of Russian troops still stationed in Georgia and Armenia, Moscow has for years sought to deter Western pipeline investors by fomenting bloody ethnic conflicts near the pipeline route, in the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan and in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Ajaria.

Washington's Great Game opponents in Moscow and Beijing resent the dramatically growing US influence in their strategic backyard. Worried that the American presence might encourage internal unrest in its Central Asian province of Xinjiang—whose Turkic and Muslim population, the Uighurs, are striving for more autonomy—China has recently held joint military exercises with Kyrgyzstan.

The Russian government initially tolerated the American intrusion into its former empire, hoping Washington would in turn ignore Russian atrocities in Chechnya. However, for the Kremlin, the much-hyped "new strategic partnership" against terror between the Kremlin and the White House has always been little more than a tactical and temporary marriage of convenience to allow Russia's battered economy to recover with the help of capital from Western companies. The US presence in Russia's backyard is becoming ever more assertive, but it is unthinkable for the majority of the Russian establishment to permanently cede its hegemonic claims on Central Asia.

'[The Americans] don't help us, the people, but only the government. I hate America.'
—A young Uzbek Muslim

One man who is quite frank about this is Viktor Kalyuzhny, the Russian deputy foreign minister and President Vladimir Putin's special envoy to the Caspian region, whom I interviewed in Moscow last year. "We have a saying in Russia," he told me. "If you have guests in the house there are two times when you are happy. One is when they arrive, and one is when they leave again." To make sure that I got the message, Kalyuzhny added, "Guests should know that it is impolite to stay for too long."

Unfazed by such Russian sensitivities, American troops in Central Asia seem to be there to stay. Two years ago, when I visited the new US air base in Kyrgyzstan, I was struck by the massive commitment the Pentagon had made. With the help of dozens of excavators, bulldozers and cranes, a pioneer unit was busy erecting a new hangar for F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets. Brawny pioneers in desert camouflage were setting up hundreds of "Harvest Falcon" and "Force Provider" tents for nearly 3,000 soldiers. I asked their commander, a wiry brigadier general, if and when the troops would ever leave Kyrgyzstan. "There is no time limit," he replied. "We will pull out only when all Al Qaeda cells have been eradicated."

Today, the troops are still there and many tents have been replaced by concrete buildings. Increasingly annoyed, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov has repeatedly demanded that the Americans pull out within two years. Significantly, President Putin has signed new security pacts with the Central Asian rulers and last October personally opened a new Russian military base in Kyrgyzstan. It is the first base Moscow has set up outside Russia's borders since the end of the cold war. Equipped with fighter jets, it lies only twenty miles away from the US air base.

Besides raising the specter of interstate conflict, the Bush Administration's energy imperialism jeopardizes the few successes in the war on terror. That is because the resentment US policies cause in Central Asia makes it easier for Al Qaeda–like organizations to recruit new fighters. They hate America because in its search for antiterrorist allies in the new Great Game, the Bush Administration has wooed some of the region's most brutal autocrats, including Azerbaijan's Heydar Aliyev, Kazakhstan's Nursultan Nazarbayev and Pakistan's Musharraf.

The most tyrannical of Washington's new allies is Islom Karimov, the ex-Communist dictator of Uzbekistan, who allowed US troops to set up a large and permanent military base on Uzbek soil during the Afghan campaign in late 2001. Ever since, the Bush Administration has turned a blind eye to the Karimov regime's brutal suppression of opposition and Islamic groups. "Such people must be shot in the head. If necessary, I will shoot them myself," Karimov once famously told his rubber-stamp Parliament.

Although the US State Department acknowledges that Uzbek security forces use "torture as a routine investigation technique," Washington last year gave the Karimov regime $500 million in aid and rent payments for the US air base in Khanabad. Though Uzbek Muslims can be arrested simply for wearing a long beard, the State Department also quietly removed Uzbekistan from its annual list of countries where freedom of religion is under threat.

In the Uzbek capital of Tashkent, I once met 20-year-old Ahmad, who declined to give his family name out of fear of reprisal. Over a cup of tea the young man told me that he had just been released from prison, after serving a three-year sentence for allegedly belonging to an Islamic terrorist organization. "The guards beat me every day," Ahmad said, his eyes cast down. "It was awful, but I never stopped praying to Allah."

The group the Muslim belonged to was a religious Sufi order that, he insisted, had nothing to do with terrorists such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which is blamed for several deadly attacks in the late 1990s. "But maybe in the future my brothers and I have to defend ourselves and fight," he told me. I asked Ahmad how he felt about the arrival of American antiterror troops in Uzbekistan. "They only make things worse. They don't help us, the people, but only the government. I hate America."

What makes a man a terrorist? On my travels, I met countless angry young men who, with nothing to lose but their seemingly valueless lives, were prepared to fight for whatever radical Islamic leaders told them was worth the fight. As in the Middle East, lack of democracy is one of the root causes of terrorism in Central Asia: The young men's anger is primarily directed against their own corrupt and despotic regimes. As Washington shores up these rulers, their disgusted subjects increasingly embrace militant Islam and virulent anti-Americanism.

Recent events in Azerbaijan are perfect examples of how this works. Whenever I travel to the capital of Baku, I am impressed with the new glittery office buildings in the city center and the many flashy Mercedes cars on the streets. Smart *biznizmeny* and

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their wives stroll past expensive boutiques, wearing Versace and Cartier jewelry. They are the few winners of the oil boom. Just ten miles out of Baku, however, in the desolate suburb of Sumgait, about 50,000 people live in abject poverty. Many are refugees who fled the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave in the early 1990s.

All of Sumgait's fourteen Soviet-era factories have been shut down, leaving everybody jobless. There is little electricity or running water. One man, who eked out a living with his wife and several children and grandchildren in a single room of a shabby highrise block, told me, "What oil boom? Our president's family and the oil companies put all the money into their pockets."

Azerbaijan is known as "BP country," as the company wields a budget of $15 billion to be invested off the Azeri coast over the coming years. "If we pulled out of Baku," a former BP spokesman once told me, "the country would collapse overnight." So Big Oil's interests had to be taken into account when Azerbaijan's late ruler, Heydar Aliyev, feeling that his death was nigh, rigged the presidential elections last October to pass on his crown to his playboy son Ilham. This establishment of the first dynasty in the former Soviet Union triggered popular protests in the capital that were brutally put down by Aliyev's security forces. They arrested hundreds of opposition members and killed at least two people.

The next day, US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage officially congratulated the new baby dictator on his "strong showing." Armitage is also a former board member of the US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce in Washington, set up in 1995 to promote US companies' interests in Azerbaijan's multibillion-dollar oil industry. Democracy versus stability for oil investments—few Azeris will forget what side the US government took.

It need not be that way. The US-supported overthrow in November of strongman Eduard Shevardnadze in neighboring Georgia, a linchpin country for the pipeline export of Caspian oil and gas, showed that protecting strategic energy interests can, however accidentally, go hand in hand with promoting democracy. To be sure, the Bush Administration's motives for dropping Shevardnadze had less to do with a sudden pro-democracy epiphany than with hard-nosed realpolitik: Washington's longtime pet ally—who had secured nearly $100 million in annual US aid for Georgia, which is more per capita than any other country except Israel—could no longer provide stability in Georgia and had recently allowed Russian companies to buy up most of the country's energy sector, which increased Moscow's clout on this crucial Great Game battleground at Washington's expense.

While it is too early to tell how things in Georgia will play out, one general lesson appears clear: The September 11 attacks have shown that the US government can no longer afford to be indifferent toward how badly dictators in the Middle East and Central Asia treat their people, as long as they keep the oil flowing. American dealings with Saudi Arabia have become a fatal affair. President Bush acknowledged as much in recent speeches calling on Saudi Arabia to start democratic reforms to dry up the breeding ground for terrorism.

In Central Asia, however, the current US policy of aiding tyrants repeats the very same mistakes that gave rise to bin Ladenism in the 1980s and '90s. Most Central Asians believe that US antiterror troops are stationed in their region mainly to secure American oil interests. I lost count of how many Azeris, Uzbeks, Afghans and Iraqis I met during my travels who told me that "it's all about oil." Right or wrong, this distrust of the US government's motives is one of the key factors in the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq. The presence of US troops on their soil motivates angry Muslim men to sign up with Al Qaeda–like terror groups. However terribly they suffered under Saddam Hussein, few Iraqis today believe that America would have sent its young men and women to the region if there were only strawberry fields to protect.

In Central Asia, the current US policy of aiding tyrants repeats the same mistakes that gave rise to bin Ladenism in the 1980s and '90s.

With or without military force, there are obvious limits to any US government's ability to nudge autocratic petrostate regimes toward democratic reform—especially as long as America is becoming ever more dependent on oil imports. An addict is hardly able to force his pusher to change his criminal activities. In the United States, 4 percent of the world's population consumes one-fourth of the world's energy. One out of every seven barrels of oil produced in the world is burned on American highways. This is not quite a position that allows us to tell Arab oil sheiks and Central Asian despots, "If you don't stop churning out angry young men, we won't do business with you anymore."

For the common people in all oil-producing countries (except Norway and Britain), oil wealth has been more of a curse than a blessing, leading to corruption, political instability, economic decline, environmental degradation, coups and often bloody civil wars. This is why oil is known as the "devil's tears." Today, however, the local people's problems are America's too, because it has become clear since the September 11 attacks how the politics of oil contribute to the rise of radical Islamic terrorism.

So, while the war on terror may not be all about oil, certainly in one sense it should be about just that. A bold policy to reduce the addiction to oil would be the most powerful weapon to win the epic struggle against terrorism. In the short term, this means saving energy through more efficient technologies, necessary anyway to slow the greenhouse effect and global warming. The Bush Administration's old-style energy policies of yet more fossil-fuel production and waste continue in the wrong direction. It is time to realize that more gas-guzzling Hummers on US highways only lead to more Humvees (and American soldiers) near oilfields. What is urgently needed instead—for security reasons—is a sustainable alternative energy policy.

Ultimately, no matter how cleverly the United States plays its cards in the new Great Game in Central Asia and no matter how many military forces are deployed to protect oilfields and pipelines, the oil infrastructure may prove too vulnerable to terrorist attacks to guarantee a stable supply. The Caspian region may be the next big gas station, but, as in the Middle East, there are already a lot of men running around throwing matches. ■

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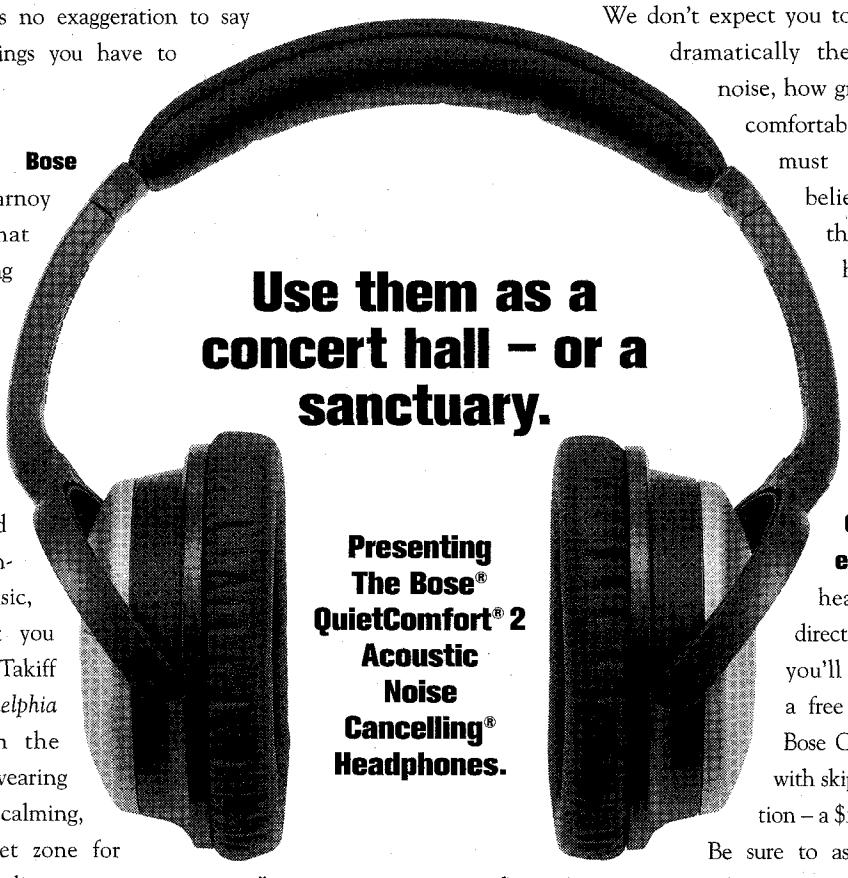

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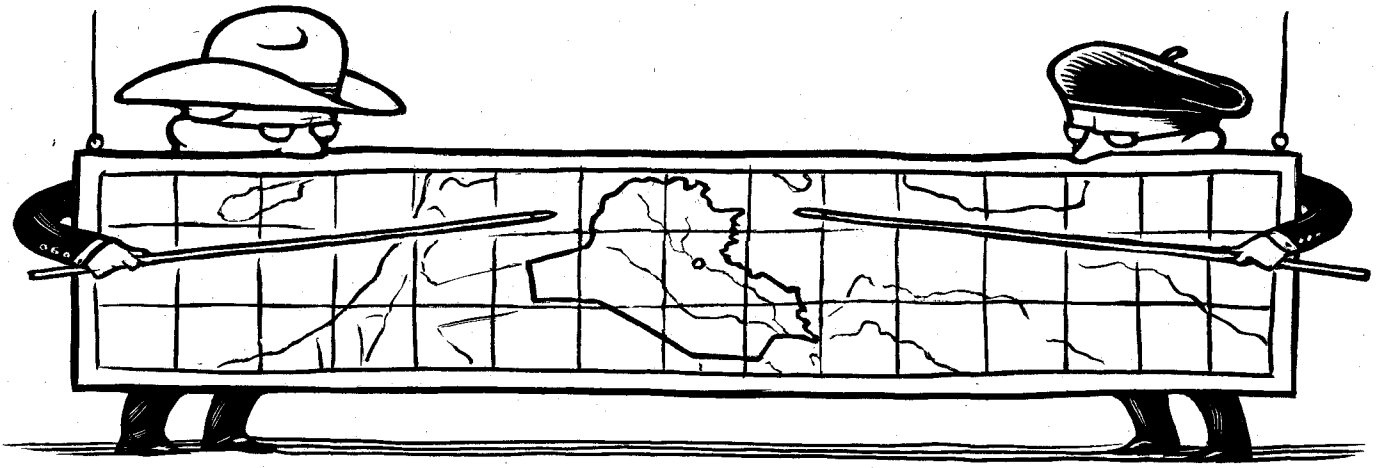
THE STORY OF THE IRAQI ADVENTURE IS NOT OVER, BUT SO FAR, DESPITE THE CAPTURE OF SADDAM, THE FRENCH HAVE BEEN MORE RIGHT THAN THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION.



LARS LEETARU

France, the United States & Iraq

STANLEY HOFFMANN

The rift between France and the United States that emerged during the run-up to the war in Iraq persists, despite various recent overtures from France. Even though the campaign of anti-French calumnies has ended, France's reputation in the United States has been damaged, and the French position on Iraq is still widely misunderstood. As the exclusion of France and other opponents of the war from postwar reconstruction contracts has shown, those who, in Washington, considered that the French had doubly betrayed the United States—by opposing a war that the "senior ally" deemed in its national interest, and by courting votes at the Security Council of the United Nations (as if the United States hadn't been seeking them too)—do not seem to be ready to forgive.

There are two stories here. One is about the way French dissent was treated in Washington. In the days of General de Gaulle, his attempt to dissuade the Johnson Administration from getting into a quagmire in Vietnam and failing as badly as the French had when they spent eight bloody years (1946–54) fighting Vietnamese nationalism was interpreted by American officials as evidence of the general's malevolence and anti-Americanism. His suggestions for a settlement were dismissed—and eight years of American war followed, despite the original conviction that the Americans would be welcome as protectors against Communism, untainted by colonialism. But this reaction was not accompanied by any general assault on France. De Gaulle's position in France, in Europe and in much of the Third World was just too strong, and the general's support of the United States during the Cuban missile crisis had been impressive.

This time, despite France's support of and active participation in the war against the Taliban after September 11, there was no such restraint in Washington. Indeed, there was a well-orchestrated campaign of innuendoes, distortions and lies aimed not only at discrediting French arguments but France itself. The campaign only stopped after the French ambassador, a patient man, finally listed the biggest lies (for instance, about French material interests in Iraq, or recent weapons shipments to Iraq) and sent the list to the White House. What was said about France's fundamental unwillingness to support any war against Saddam Hussein was false. What was not said was that, in fact, the French had informed the United States that they would contribute forces if there was evidence of Saddam's terminal unwillingness to get rid of his remaining weapons of mass destruction. Nor was it said that, shortly before the war began, the French had made a compromise offer that would have allowed the United States to interpret the unanimous (and ambiguous) Resolution 1441 of November 2002 as a basis for war, and the French (and their supporters) to disagree, without a divisive vote in the Security Council on a second resolution—the famous second resolution that Bush had promised to Blair, that would oblige all members of the Security Council to show whether they were "with us or against us." The French had predicted that the United States would not win in the Council unless it made concessions, and Washington had, in the end, withdrawn the resolution anyhow for lack of votes.

The Bush Administration also made much of a "hardening" of the French position in mid-January, without revealing that the US representative at the UN had just informed his French counterpart that the United States had decided to go to war very soon—at a moment when the French still hoped for a prolongation of UN inspections. Colin Powell himself, in mid-March, interpreted a statement by President Jacques Chirac asserting that France would not support the second resolution drafted by the United States "under any circumstances" as showing that France

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would never go to war. Washington was so furious at the French for having rallied enough support on the Security Council to deprive the United States of the legitimation it sought that it encouraged an American boycott of French products, choosing to ignore Germany and remain friendly with Russia (both of which had sided with France), but to punish the French.

The second, and ultimately more important, story is that of the French position itself. The French disagreed with the American case for several reasons, some of which they held in common with American critics of the neoconservative push for war. They did not believe that Iraq, weakened by its defeat in 1991 and by seven years of UN inspections, posed a "clear and present danger" to the United States, and that deterrence of Iraqi aggression against its neighbors or Israel was no longer a valid policy (after all, the United States had deterred the Soviets, a far more powerful adversary than Iraq, for forty years). The French (like Gen. Brent Scowcroft) feared that war against Iraq would both deprive the war on terrorism of attention and resources and attract terrorists to Iraq. Above all, the French emphasized the importance of international law and of such institutions as the UN, NATO and the European Union in an interdependent world where no power can, by itself, get its own way, a position dismissed by the hard-liners in the Bush Administration, who had only contempt for international norms, the UN, and established alliances, and proclaimed the virtues of unilateralism and of "coalitions of the [handpicked] willing," fished out of such alliances.

The French preference for a return, and toughening, of UN inspections over immediate war had three components. One was faith in the ability of these inspections (which did indeed discover, just before the war began, Iraqi missiles that exceeded the limits fixed in 1991—and got the regime of Saddam Hussein to destroy them). The French had full confidence in Hans Blix, whom Washington tried to discredit despite his obvious objectivity and toughness.

A second component was France's reluctance to wage a war for regime change. The French had no more enthusiasm than anyone else did for Saddam Hussein, although they (along with the United States) had provided him with help at the time of his war against Iran. But on the one hand, they thought that removing a government from power should not be done by one country, or a small group of countries, without broader legitimacy, a formula for world chaos. Also, there was no recent evidence of spectacular violations of human rights (of the kind Saddam Hussein had inflicted on rebellious Kurds and Shiites in 1991), and there was little chance that the UN would endorse such a move—too many skeletons rattled in too many members' closets, including Russia and China. On the other hand, they thought the American objective of democratizing Iraq (and of using Iraq as a lever for spreading democracy throughout the Middle East) was far too simple-minded, that the "liberated" Iraqis would be resentful of foreign occupation and that, indeed, the American habit of both discounting the importance of nationalism abroad and of equating democracy and moderation was unrealistic (they remembered the democratic elections in Algeria in 1991, which gave a majority to the Islamists). Chirac, in his youth, fought in the Algerian war, and saw the strength of Arab nationalism.

Thirdly, the French—with 5 or 6 million Muslims in France, and long experience of terrorism on French soil—were eager to avoid provoking a real "clash of civilizations" between the Muslim world and the West. They thought an attack on an Arab country that could not be justified in terms of self-defense (unlike the war on the Taliban) or in terms of complicity with terrorism would fuel anti-American hatreds and increase, especially among the young and the poor, the influence of Islamist extremists both in the Muslim world and in France (the rise of anti-Semitic incidents in France, mainly committed by Arab immigrants, has deeply alarmed Chirac). Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, a passionate believer in the complementarity of cultures (and a man born in Morocco), has been particularly worried about further turmoil in the Middle East, the spread of terrorism across borders there and a rise of anti-Western feelings. As the French saw it, priority ought to have been given to a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but the American priority of the war against Iraq and of the war on terrorism could only help the policies of Ariel Sharon.

Having predicted the troubles that would afflict a foreign occupation of Iraq, the French have proposed a radical shift in policy.

Of course, the story of the Iraqi adventure is not over, but so far—despite the capture of Saddam Hussein—the French have been more right than the Bush Administration. Nor have the French been isolated, despite the best efforts of Washington to sideline NATO (where the French have a veto) and to divide the European Union. In Europe, the Franco-German alliance is tighter than ever, and more determined to push ahead for a stronger European defense system with all those other members of the EU that are willing to take part in such an enterprise. At this point, it is the British who are isolated—devoid of real influence in Washington, weakened, on the European continent, in their effort to make sure that the developing common European diplomacy and defense do not go too far in seeking autonomy from Washington, as well as hurt by the lengths to which Blair has gone in aligning himself with Bush. In many countries of the developing world, including in the Middle East, the French position has been popular—not to mention among opponents of the war in the United States.

Having predicted the troubles that would afflict a foreign occupation of Iraq, the French wasted no time in proposing a radical shift in policy. Having concluded, with both sound reasoning and solid evidence, that it was the occupation itself that provoked resistance and violence, they have suggested replacing the "logic of security" with a "logic of sovereignty." They do not deny the seriousness of insecurity and the trouble it causes for the political and material reconstruction of the country. But they believe the way of dealing with it is to restore Iraqi sovereignty as swiftly as possible, to put the US-commanded occupation forces at the service of the Iraqis while they reform their institutions and to grant to the UN—with its long experience in peacekeeping and nation-building—a general supervising role both over the military operations and over the political transition. They are clearly con-

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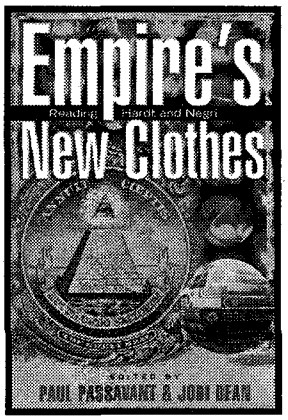

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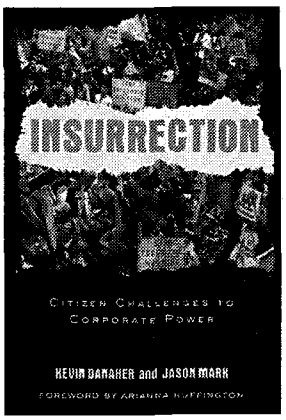

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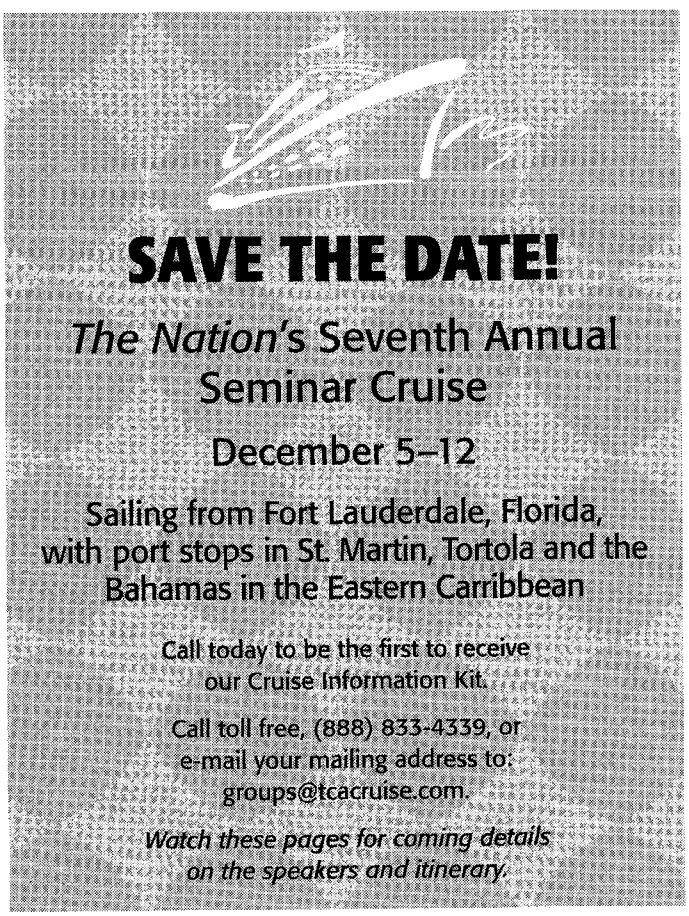
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cerned that the members of any Iraqi temporary authority entrusted with sovereignty be both capable of coping with the immense ethnic, religious and political tensions of the country, and as immune as possible from the charge of being stooges of the American occupiers.

Washington's reaction was, at first, predictably derisive and hostile—the French plan, according to Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, was thoroughly unrealistic. But since the escalation of attacks on American and other targets in Iraq, the United States has abruptly changed course and is talking of an "Iraqization" that would, in fact, rapidly transfer authority to an Iraqi government, without waiting for a general election and a new constitution. Differences with French proposals still exist: The speed promised by Washington is still not as great as Villepin had argued for, the length of the military occupation of Iraq is a likely bone of contention, and a genuine increase in the role of the UN is still anathema to the Bush Administration. The way in which Saddam will be tried is another potential subject of disagreement. But the fact that the Security Council agreed unanimously in October to the American draft resolution outlining, even in rather vague terms, a transformation of the occupation, showed that the French were quite capable of pragmatism, once the direction set was no longer the opposite of what they deemed the right one.

Differences between France and the United States in foreign affairs will remain. They have many origins. In international politics the United States seeks to preserve and extend its hegemony (and will undoubtedly continue to do so even if it should rediscover the necessity of multilateralism as the way of making hegemony effective and acceptable). The French, who do not mean by "multipolarity" a return to the balance-of-power politics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (as Americans often do), think that American might and hubris need to be restrained by other powers, and that in fact it is only in the military area that the world is unipolar; as my friend and colleague Joseph Nye, dean of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, points out, economic power is not an American monopoly, and what he calls soft power—the power to attract, to persuade and to influence—is very widely distributed (and the Bush Administration has reduced America's soft power drastically). French ambitions for the EU are not aimed at making it a rival of the United States (or the euro a rival of the dollar) but, quite simply, at making it a force of its own, and not a satellite, often alongside the United States.

A more fundamental source of irritation is the fact that the United States and France are the two democracies whose revolutionary heritage has convinced them that they are exceptional by having universally valid values. These are not identical (the main difference resides in the French experience of, and attachment to, a strong state, in the importance the French give to economic and social rights, and in French dislike of uncontrolled capitalism); also, the French don't have the might to propagate these values by force if necessary. But Americans are irritated by the pretension of (as John F. Kennedy said) a country the size of Texas to "grandeur" and universal relevance. A difference in values between the two countries recently emerged over the question of sovereignty: In the United States, and not only on the right,

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a kind of legal exceptionalism reluctant to accept the superiority of international norms is still pervasive, whereas in France, for so long a champion of national sovereignty, the notion of shared or pooled sovereignty has become the basis of European integration and the essence of a new world order.

A third source of American annoyance has to do with the French style in foreign affairs (which is well analyzed in a book by Charles Cogan, just published by the US Institute of Peace). The French believe in being assertive, forceful and articulate in their defense of what they deem right. The contrast with British (though not Blairish) understatement or German contemporary mildness could not be greater. The man who is largely responsible for this style is General de Gaulle. It was both an expression of his formidable personality and a major part of his pedagogy, aimed at restoring French pride and influence after the decadence of the interwar period and the disastrous years of occupation by, and official collaboration with, the Nazis. Considered in this historical context, the recent debate in France on French decline is not very significant—it is largely the outcry of a few intellectuals who want faster economic and social reforms that would unfetter the economy for more free enterprise and fewer social protections than would probably be tolerated by the beneficiaries of the welfare state. These critics want France not only to follow the American social model but the American lead in world affairs. The fear of decline has been present ever since France's defeat by Prussia in 1871, but it's clear that political elites and bureaucrats have absorbed, consciously or not, the message of de Gaulle: "Be yourselves."

Of course, France does face serious domestic challenges. Reforming the educational system and social security would be difficult, given the opposition of the people who would be affected. The left is fractured and leaderless, like the current US Democratic Party. Above all, the integration of the Muslim population remains a divisive issue—even within the government and its majority.

None of this should worry Americans. Their popularity as a people remains high in France, where distinguishing between a nation and its government is an ability honed during France's own turbulent history. The Chirac administration, during the recent storm, deliberately refrained from attacking American motives in the way the Bush Administration savaged France's. Not every critic of US actions is anti-American, any more than critics of Sharon's moves are all anti-Semitic. And sometimes, it is the sharpest critics who have the most foresight. ■

A QUESTIONABLE PLAN TO WIRE POOR SCHOOLS HAS TURNED INTO A BUSINESS BOONDOGGLE.

The Internet School Scam

TODD OPPENHEIMER

When large amounts of cash and the entrepreneurial spirit intersect with an institution as impoverished and trusting as schools, it's not long before financial scandal strikes. That time is now here, and the nation's public schools are getting a spectacular Enron-style education, soon to be elevated to the investigative chambers of Congress. This scandal also illustrates, rather painfully, the confusion among education's policy-makers about what really should be emphasized in the nation's classrooms.

LARS LEETARU

The story begins with the schools' rapid investment over the past decade in computer technology and Internet systems. The dollars for many of those purchases have come from a little-known federal program called the "e-rate" (for education rate). Launched as part of the 1996 Telecommunications Act, the program is overseen by the Federal Communications Commission and its designees, a series of loosely run, quasi-public management firms. Each year, the e-rate provides poor schools with roughly $2.25 billion in subsidies for new Internet networks. The subsidies come from a tax on everyone's phone bill—a line innocuously labeled "universal service fee"—which started at 3 percent but now hovers around 9 percent.

The revenues from this tax cover up to 90 percent of a poor school's costs for Internet systems. This has allowed school districts to contract with some of the nation's top-of-the-line technology firms—outfits like NEC, Verizon and IBM. Construction contracting has always been fertile ground for inflated costs and corrupt payment schemes, but the Internet wiring jobs—with their wide popularity, unprecedented expense and technical complexity—have taken these opportunities to spectacular new levels.

Consider a few details from one such deal, in San Francisco. In October 2000 the FCC's management firm approved a $50 million grant to finance a massive school networking project in the city. (The school district was on tap for another $18 million, making the total cost come to $68 million.) Months later, to everyone's surprise, the district turned the $50 million grant down. After examining the contract, district technicians had discovered they could build the system themselves for less than their meager share of the costs—that is, for less than $18 million.

The reasons become apparent in the fine print of the voluminous bid from NEC, the firm that won the San Francisco contract. On page after page, NEC generously marked up prices on computer hardware, sometimes by as much as 400 percent. On one

Todd Oppenheimer, winner of the National Magazine Award, is the author of The Flickering Mind: The False Promise of Technology in the Classroom and How Learning Can Be Saved *(Random House, www.flickeringmind.net).*

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small Internet switch, for example, NEC's bid would have given the firm a profit margin of $780,000. This is the educational equivalent of the $640 toilet seats famously sold to the Pentagon by military contractors during the Reagan Administration.

The basic problem here is well-known to federal authorities. Various Republican Congress members, wary of anything that smells like a new tax, have long been questioning the necessity of the e-rate program. In 1998 Senator John McCain was concerned enough about oversight weaknesses in the program that he asked the General Accounting Office to investigate. The GAO found that the FCC's first e-rate management firm was sending out letters of funding commitment before evaluating the projects it was financing, and that it had yet to set up an auditing system. The GAO also noted that the e-rate created a duplicate program for funding technology in schools, because $12 billion was already available through the Education Department.

Although the FCC's e-rate management firms promised to make corrections, little was done. An audit by the FCC's Inspector General last year found questionable financial dealings of one sort or another "at nearly all locations" where e-rate contracts were examined. By late 2002 federal authorities had begun to take some action. In one case prosecutors charged a New York company, Connect2 Internet Networks—which had done more than $9 million of business with thirty-six schools—with eight counts of federal crimes. The allegations: The firm bought more expensive gear than its customer schools could afford, created fake invoices to suggest the schools had paid their share, then coached school officials to lie about the arrangements. (Connect2's owner, John Angelides, eventually pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy.)

As the Connect2 case was developing, federal auditors killed an $18 million e-rate job with IBM in Ysleta, Texas. They concluded that IBM had set up the job in such a way that it precluded bids from competing Internet contractors. IBM denied the charges, but government regulators said, "The record reflects that the overriding goal of the IBM-Ysleta relationship" was to maximize the federal subsidy, "not necessarily to promote educational goals." IBM, which offered the same "sole source" option to many districts around the country, was not a small player in this game. Up until the Ysleta contract, it had received $351 million of e-rate money. For 2003, IBM sought nearly $1 billion in e-rate projects—nearly half the program's annual budget. Most of that money is now being held up while the problems with IBM's bids are investigated.

By spring 2003, Congressional investigators had gotten wind of these troubles and were embarked on their own inquiries. These are now wrapping up and are expected to be the subject of hearings before the House Energy and Commerce Committee in February or March. From all indications, investigators have found some smoking guns. "We have uncovered numerous instances of fraud and abuse totaling tens of millions of dollars," says Ken Johnson, the committee's press secretary. "We're convinced that the problem is far worse than we feared." There is no formal count yet on how many companies or schools are involved in these abuses, but insider estimates indicate that dozens of different companies across the country may be implicated. (At

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this point, only two cases have made it through the courts.)

In the wake of these troubles, the FCC and its e-rate management firms are starting to take more care in approving new grants. But the size of the e-rate grants, and many others that support high-end wired systems in the schools, have not appreciably diminished.

There are three bitter paradoxes in this. First, it won't be long before the Internet goes wireless, which will make much of the schools' investment in wired computing—at a cost of roughly $80 billion over the past decade—obsolete. Second, yesteryear's frenzy to wire the schools occurred during very flush times. Today, states are struggling with budget cuts—and the damage these cuts are doing to fundamental school needs such as building repairs, teacher salaries and purchases of books, science supplies and other classroom necessities.

Third, and perhaps most important, most computer technology has been sold to schools—especially poor schools—on little more than hype. One of the most commonly heard selling points in this campaign is to prepare youngsters for tomorrow's increasingly high-tech jobs. But when business leaders talk about what they need from new recruits, they hardly mention computer skills, which they find they can teach employees relatively easily on their own. Most employers say their priority is what are sometimes called "soft" skills: a deep knowledge base; the ability to listen and communicate; to think critically and imaginatively; to read, write and figure; and many other capabilities that schools are increasingly neglecting. A report from the Information Technology Association of America, which represents a range of companies that use technology, put it this way: "Want to get a job using information technology to solve problems? Know something about the problems that need to be solved."

All of which casts entirely new light on the "digital divide"—the common belief that the poor are being shut out of social and economic opportunities because they have fewer computers than wealthy families do. Widely promoted by the Clinton Administration, this campaign has become so appealing that, according to a recent report from the Education Department, computers are almost as abundant in poor schools now as they are in wealthy ones. Nonetheless, political and education leaders continually cry about this supposedly terrible divide. In reality, the schools' new technology riches have taken the real divide between rich and poor children—the educational divide—and widened it.

In Harlem, for example, teachers in overcrowded classrooms now have to spend much of their time managing technical hassles the schools can't afford to fix, and watching for cheating, instant-messaging tricks and illicit material on screens that teachers cannot control or even see. When the computers do work, fancy software programs automate design and math functions so beautifully that students don't have to think through much of their work anymore. School papers throughout the country are so dominated by computer graphics these days that students often spend only a fraction of their time on the intellectual content of the assignment. Strangely, instead of bemoaning scenes like these, nearly everyone—teachers and parents, principals and politicians—applaud them.

Meanwhile, schools that are doing truly good work often downplay technology, concentrating instead on human basics. These not only involve creative, often theatrical, approaches to the three Rs; they also include a broader definition of achievement than the thin, standardized tests being pushed by the Bush Administration. Interestingly, most of these schools have also invested in their teachers more than they have in machinery. Before the rest of the nation's schools and their federal benefactors buy more fancy digital novelties, they should get their houses in order on academic basics of this sort. Everyone knows you need to learn to walk before you run. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

remain citizens of a particular nation-state that, even under the most restrained leadership, would "possess considerable power and influence in the world." But if a wiser course is to be taken, the "we" must also mean we human beings, and the "our" must refer to our shared planet and universe. ROBERT JAY LIFTON

SEMPER FIDEL

Arthur Miller's January 12/19 "A Visit With Castro" seemed to be a Rorschach blot onto which scores of readers projected their views on Castro, Cuba and the Revolution, both positive and negative. —The Editors

Los Angeles

■ Heartiest congratulations to Arthur Miller for having grasped that Fidel Castro has overstayed his welcome. Even so, comparing the Cuban leader to Don Quixote, as Miller does, seems rather inconsiderate. When Castro's regime imprisoned and executed dissidents last April, Harvard scholar Samantha Power observed with breathtaking simplicity that the regime's actions had been "a criminal decapitation of civil society." Poor old Quixote, the gracious embodiment of a failed idealism and misguided nobility, really should not be implicated in Castro's sordid mess. DAVID LANDAU

Santa Rosa, Calif.

■ I do not share Arthur Miller's view that poverty in Cuba is solely the result of the US embargo or desertion by the Russians. Even Fidel admits that the regime has made mistakes, most notably in not reducing Cuba's dependence on Soviet aid or doing more to diversify the economy in forty-five years. Today, the dependence on tourism has created a two-tier society, with those working in tourism having a much higher standard of living than professionals working for the government, an obvious contradiction of socialism.

On the other hand, last year Cuba's economy grew more than the rest of Latin America's, and all Cubans have free healthcare and education. When compared with other developing countries, Cuba's performance over the past forty-five years is remarkable. Unfortunately, this has not included freedom of expression. But Cubans have not experienced the massacres or death squads of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador or Guatemala. When I visit Cuba, I am struck by the spirit of the people, despite the deprivations, and when I return via Mexico, I am shocked by its extremes of wealth and poverty.

I expected more of a condemnation of the repression of writers and artists in Cuba—especially the extreme punishments of Cuban dissidents last year—by Miller, a victim of and fighter against McCarthyism. But I also share his view that the embargo is an anachronism that has not only failed to dislodge Fidel but has helped to rally the people behind him and keep him in power. TONY WHITE

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 8)

with war and peace issues and political activism saw a richer internal dialogue than did the groups focused on development or ethnic issues. There wasn't enough interaction between the 15,000 Dalits and foreign delegates. Similarly, the program lacked in-depth sessions on the Indian economy and the truth behind the current "feel good" hype. For many delegates, the absence of translation into Spanish and Hindi was a big disappointment.

Despite its flaws, the Mumbai forum continued the interaction, collective reflection, experience-sharing and strategy-building that have been integral to the WSF. Equally vital, it opened a dialogue between the organized left and civil society organizations (CSOs) and movements focused on global justice and peace. Communist and socialist leaders, especially from Western Europe, South and Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America, held discussions with CSOs premised upon a shared rejection of capitalist globalization. These CSOs arose in radical discontinuity from the organized left during a period of disarray following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the crisis of socialism. Prominent in this dialogue process were India's Communist Party (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India, which command high moral and political importance despite having suffered a halving of their national vote (now under 3 percent each). Traditionally, the Indian CPs have been suspicious of CSOs working on development, peace and nuclear disarmament. Until the 1998 India-Pakistan nuclear blasts, they looked at the issue of nuclear weapons through a cold war prism. They wrongly assimilated the CSOs' antiglobalization agendas with conventional nationalist "anti-imperialism."

Left leaders from elsewhere also joined the process. Fausto Bertinotti, national secretary of the Italian Communist Refoundation Party, passionately argued that the left must not try to hegemonize or "give direction to" social movements: "We must distance ourselves from the culture of politics which led to the defeat of the working-class movement in the twentieth century." Alejandro Bendaña of Nicaragua's Sandinista Party heartily agreed, as did CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan. Luis Ayala, the Socialist International's secretary general, from Chile, echoed a similar sentiment: "We need a new strategy, which will give back to democracy the hopes it once had. For this, social movements and political parties must work together." (In sharp contrast to this trend stood "Mumbai Resistance," an event organized across the road by Maoists. It generated negative publicity in India's conservative media, which equated the two gatherings despite the much smaller numbers and thinner agenda of the "rival" forum.)

As a result of a growing recognition that the global peace movement transcends nationalist "anti-imperialism," the organized left is getting deeply involved with the post–Iraq war global peace movement. It sees this mobilization as the world's "Second Superpower." A closer dialogue between the left and the movements for justice and peace will strengthen both. PRAFUL BIDWAI

Praful Bidwai, a Delhi-based columnist and a peace and human rights activist, recently co-wrote New Nukes: India, Pakistan and Global Nuclear Disarmament *(Interlink).*

SUBJECT TO DEBATE

(Continued From Page 9)

Wellesley girls in *Mona Lisa Smile*. No one reprimands Laura Bush for abandoning her career as a librarian and spending her life as her husband's den mother. No one asks Hadassah Lieberman or Elizabeth Edwards or Gertie Clark how come they have so much free time on their hands that they can saddle up with their husbands' campaign for months, or why, if they care so much about politics, they aren't running for office themselves.

Don't you wish, just once, the questioners and pontificators would turn it around? After all, if a woman were running for President, would they expect her doctor husband to abandon his ailing patients and his high-school-age son to soften her image? *Au contraire*, they would regard such a man as a pussy-whipped wimp, a loser, very possibly even...weird. When Bob Dole said he'd give money to John McCain, his wife Elizabeth's rival in her brief presidential campaign in 2000, nobody called him a self-centered, disengaged, mean husband, or made much of the fact that his wife had knocked herself out for him when he ran in 1996.

What if the media tried on for size the notion that having an independent wife says something *good* about a candidate? For example, maybe, if his wife is not at his beck and call, he won't assume the sun rises because he wants to get up; maybe, if his wife has her own goals in life, her own path to tread, he won't think women were put on earth to further his ambitions; maybe, if he and his wife are true partners—which is not the same as her pouring herself into his career and his being genuinely grateful, the best-case scenario of the traditional political marriage—he may even see women as equals. Why isn't it the candidates who use their wives to further their careers with plastic smiles and cheery waves who have to squirm on *Primetime*?

Dean's poor showing in Iowa and second-place finish in New Hampshire suggest that media mud sticks. In a race with many candidates, in which the top contenders each have their pluses and minuses but are also rather close to one another other politically, perception matters. Dean too "angry"? Something off about the marriage? Mrs. Dean a fruitcake? Oh, you heard that too? A lot of Democratic primary voters are looking not for the candidate they themselves like best but for the one with the best shot at beating Bush. If a candidate starts looking wounded, however unfair the attack, forget him—on to the next. The process feels a bit like rifling through the sale racks at Bloomingdale's when you have to find a fancy dress for a party given by strangers—no, no, maybe, hmmm, oh all right—but who knows, maybe out of all this second-guessing the strongest candidate, with the broadest appeal and the best organization, will ultimately emerge.

Right now, John Kerry may look like that man. But consider this: Before Dr. Judy, it was Teresa Heinz Kerry in the headlights of the *New York Times* front page. She was, John Tierney suggested, too opinionated, not fixated enough on her husband, unable to connect with the voters, off in her own world. You know, weird. There was that pesky name problem, too: Teresa Heinz? Teresa Kerry? Such a puzzle. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Business of Theory

WILLIAM DERESIEWICZ

AFTER THEORY. By Terry Eagleton. Basic. 231 pp. $25.

FIGURES OF DISSENT: Critical Essays on Fish, Spivak, Zizek and Others. By Terry Eagleton. Verso. 272 pp. $25.

The last decade or two have witnessed an insidious shift in American culture, one that goes to the heart of the way we talk about our society. It's a shift that involves those two words I just used: "culture" and "society." How easily the first rolls off the tongue these days, whereas the second strikes a discordant, dated note. Because who talks about "society" anymore? For today's horde of "cultural critics" and "cultural theorists," some of them working in "cultural studies" departments, American culture (pop or otherwise) is the site of any number of important issues, trends and struggles, but American society is, well, nowhere. It's as if we've come to believe that our collective life is a matter of nothing more than images and brands, discourses and signs, and not, as we once recognized, material issues like poverty, jobs and (another word we no longer use) equality. Culture matters, of course—the very displacement I'm talking about is a cultural issue—but it matters because of its effect on concrete economic and political realities. Gloria Steinem wanted people to say "police officer" instead of "policeman" because she knew it would help get more women into blue uniforms, not because she thought language was any kind of end in itself.

It is to this shift, understood in the specific context of academic discourse and as a global rather than a narrowly American phenomenon, that Terry Eagleton addresses himself in *After Theory*. Eagleton, a combative and fiercely articulate Marxist who was once the Young Turk of British literary studies, is by now, at 60, its grand old man. A third-generation Irish-Catholic immigrant from the industrial slums of Salford, he recently took up a specially created chair at Manchester University after four decades at Oxbridge. Relentlessly prolific (some twenty books and counting) in a range of forms (fiction, drama and memoir as well as criticism and theory), he is a writer of terrific energy, wit and popularity. *Literary Theory* (1983), which made the intricacies of structuralism, deconstruction and the rest of the theoretical menagerie accessible to students worldwide, has sold nearly a million copies.

A combative, fiercely articulate and witty Marxist literary critic, Terry Eagleton has made theory a fun—and lucrative—trade.

But while *After Theory* sounds like a sequel to Eagleton's most famous work, the title is actually a bit of false advertising. The book is neither an explication of theoretical developments over the past two decades nor an argument that theory, in the sense of "systematic reflection on our guiding assumptions," is, should or ever could be dead. Instead, after tracing the rise and fall of cultural theory in the narrower sense (he dates its heyday to 1965–80) and casting some characteristically Eagletonian scorn on what's been happening in literary studies since ("those who can, think up feminism or structuralism; those who can't, apply such insights to *Moby-Dick* or *The Cat in the Hat*"), he takes aim at theory's omissions. With its focus on cultural rather than economic or political issues as well as its doctrinaire aversion to ideas of collective action, historical progress or objective reality, academic theory, Eagleton claims, has failed to address questions fundamen-

William Deresiewicz teaches English at Yale. His new book, a study of Jane Austen and the Romantic poets, will be published later this year by Columbia University Press.

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tal to the struggle against global capital: "morality and metaphysics," "love, biology, religion and revolution," not to mention evil, death, suffering and truth.

The book's second half takes up these very questions. Drawing on both Aristotle and the Judeo-Christian tradition, with a surprisingly small admixture of Marx, Eagleton articulates a set of ideas about the nature of human happiness and of the collective life necessary to achieve it that is often persuasive and beautiful. From Aristotle he takes the notion that happiness is not, as capitalist ideology insists, a matter of achieving wealth or success or indeed any goal but of fulfilling one's nature as a human being, the flourishing of one's innate capacities for excellence and virtue.

But if the good life means becoming more fully human by developing the virtues, it takes both strenuous practice (one becomes brave or compassionate by being brave or compassionate) and the social conditions that make such practice possible. Ethics, in other words, is a subset of politics. "If you want to be good, you need a good society," Eagleton writes; "nobody can thrive when they are starving, miserable or oppressed." A true ethics is thus a materialist one, a morality not of feeling but of acting: feeding the hungry, comforting the sick.

It is here that Aristotle passes over into Christianity. For the latter, the chief virtue is love: We find our own fulfillment by contributing to the fulfillment of others—a self-sacrifice that Eagleton never claims is less than very difficult but that becomes a good bit more thinkable once we see it as a rehearsal for the ultimate, inevitable self-abandonment of death (the one reality consumer society is most desperate to deny). The archetype of such selflessness is the martyr, who dies so that others may live, but it is in any case a figment of capitalist ideology to believe that we ever possess ourselves, possess our bodies, in the first place. The force that should bind our collective life, in Eagleton's conception, is not self-interest, as in liberalism, but reciprocity. And the name for this ethic, when it assumes political form, is socialism.

All this is admirable and powerful, but there are problems. For one thing, the argument isn't nearly as coherent as I've made it sound, but proceeds instead by zigs and zags, often little more than a grab-bag of discussions, definitions and digressions, as Eagleton tries to tackle every issue he thinks the present situation demands but without having integrated them all into a coherent framework. Reading his two previous books, *The Gatekeeper*, a memoir, and *Figures of Dissent*, a collection of reviews, one discovers that he's adapted nearly a score of passages from those works for the present one. (His fertility, it turns out, is partly a matter of shameless self-plagiarism.) No wonder the book feels patched together.

For another thing, Eagleton's argument is often not much of an argument at all but rather a series of assertions that sympathetic readers are likely to agree with but that hardly stand up to the kind of rigorous analysis he himself uses so tellingly against his opponents. The fact is that for all his polish and brilliance as an explicator of other people's ideas, Eagleton has never been much of an original thinker. (Those who can, think up Marxism; those who can't, apply such insights to *Clarissa* or *Wuthering Heights*.) He even acknowledges as much in *The Gatekeeper*, referring to a youthful job as an encyclopedia salesman as his "earliest experience of peddling ideas to the masses, a project which was later to become my full-time occupation." The remark may be funny, but it's no joke. Here, trying to create a kind of moral-political Theory of Everything, he gets badly out of his depth.

Though Eagleton is brilliant at preaching to the choir, those beyond the Marxist pews aren't likely to be persuaded by his new book.

But those aren't the most serious problems. Whatever the shortcomings of his argument, I for one am perfectly ready to agree with its general thrust: that capitalism is irredeemably wicked, that no amount of incrementalist tinkering will make it otherwise and that, in the face of the intellectual paralysis that has taken over the left, we must have the courage to imagine revolutionary new social models and take the collective action necessary to bring them into being. The big problem is that Eagleton doesn't say the first thing about how to get from here to there, or even, except in the most tritely general way, what "there" would look like. Yes, Professor Eagleton, "we need to imagine new forms of belonging." So how about trying to imagine some? Indeed, for all that Eagleton has always preached the necessity of situating objects of analysis within their historical contexts, and for all of this book's announced post–cultural studies, post-9/11 topicality, he makes virtually no reference to the present world situation in the second half of the book. It's as if he were waiting for someone like Fredric Jameson to articulate a real Marxist analysis of the latest phase of capitalist development so that he can restate (and market) it in his own much cleverer, more lucid language.

Figures of Dissent, which offers some two-score brief but vivid engagements with mostly modern or contemporary figures (Yeats, Lukacs, Spivak, Zizek), is by far the more worthwhile book. Essays on I.A. Richards and the Frankfurt School are models of historical explication; those on Wilde and Wittgenstein give us Eagleton paying homage to his intellectual heroes. For all his mordancy, he can display a generous heart, even if he displays it rather sparingly. Still, the more of these pieces one reads, the more exasperating, as well as exasperatingly predictable, Eagleton's method becomes. His unfailing strategy, as I suggested before, is to explain—that is, to explain away—a given thinker's ideas as a function of his or her historical situation. The same objection has long been made to Eagleton's literary criticism: that it treats works of art as symptoms of their societies' reigning ideologies, never as critiques of those ideologies in their own right.

For one thing, this approach is potentially exculpatory of even the most reactionary figures: How could they have done differently? For another, it fails to explain the differences between individuals from the same social situation. For a third, it's especially dangerous in the hands of a critic as ingenious as Eagleton: The problem isn't that he might fail to think up a way of explaining someone in terms of his or her historical background but that he'll never fail to do so, no matter how superficial that explanation turns out to be. Of Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence, which sees poets as engaged in Oedipal struggle with their forebears, Eagleton remarks that "these poetic warriors locked in virile combat were good old American entrepreneurs in literary clothing, Davy Crocketts and Donald Trumps of the spirit." This is, of course, ridiculous; far from being historically specific, Eagleton's analysis of the first-generation Jewish immigrant Bloom, who grew up speaking Yiddish in a working-class Bronx neighborhood, is laughably generic. It also dispenses with the specificities of individual development: Bloom was decisively shaped by Gnosticism and Freudian psychoanalysis, two traditions not exactly indigenous to the United States. In Eagleton's conception, if you can call it that, America is a social and

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ideological monolith of frontiersmen and tycoons. If this is the best he can come up with for Bloom, how am I to trust him with figures he's introducing me to for the first time?

It's funny, this approach, because *After Theory* actually criticizes the notion, advanced by "anti-theorists" like Stanley Fish and Richard Rorty, that one can never climb out of one's culture so as to be able to critique it. "Reflecting critically on our situation," Eagleton writes, "is part of our situation." But the only one capable of doing so, it seems, is Terry Eagleton. Or is he? Might we not apply Eagleton's methods to the man himself, reading his ideas as symptoms of his own historical myopia? Some of this is easy, and already amply acknowledged by Eagleton himself. It's no surprise that a working-class British intellectual who came of age in the early 1960s should have become a Marxist; the real stroke of rebelliousness would have been if he hadn't. Nor is it all that surprising that a product of Catholic schools should have retained an attachment to Catholic moral concepts and images (like martyrdom, which seems to exert a strong fascination for him as an idea, if not as a life choice). Eagleton is the kind of renegade Catholic intellectual who's rejected every last bit of dogma but still somehow feels that the church really does have all the answers.

But we can go further. One of the hallmarks of Eagleton's thought is his anti-Americanism. Snide, jokey comments about American crassness and philistinism dot his writing—like Harpo tooting his horn, he seems to throw them in whenever he feels the need to get a laugh—but the current runs deeper than that. Though very few of cultural theory's seminal thinkers were American, Eagleton's analysis of contemporary cultural studies carries the unmistakable implication that the whole sorry business is an outgrowth of American narcissism. Postcolonialism, he suggests in *Figures of Dissent*, turns out to be "a kind of 'exported' version of the United States' own grievous ethnic problems," another instance of the United States "defining the rest of the world in terms of itself." This will be news to all those postcolonialists in New Delhi or Cape Town (or Ulster, for heaven's sake) dealing with grievous ethnic problems that have much less to do with American hegemony than with the criminal legacies of older imperial powers like Great Britain. With rioting skinheads still fresh in the memory of London's Asian communities (and Muslim minorities on the boil throughout Europe), it's really something to hear an

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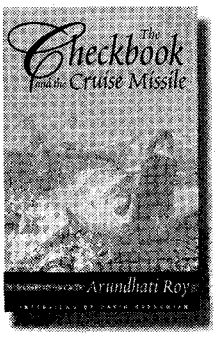

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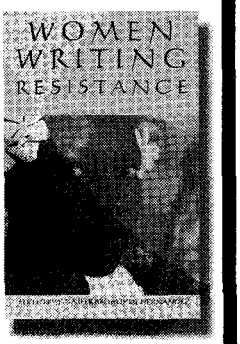

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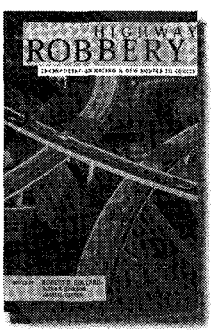

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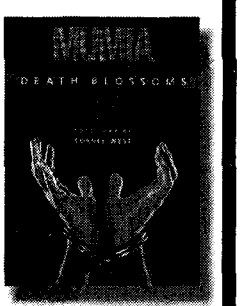

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Englishman lecture the United States about ethnic tensions. By all means, let's have some criticism of the United States from beyond our borders—we sure as hell need it—but let it be intelligent, informed criticism. Anyone who thinks of Davy Crockett and Donald Trump as the paradigms of all things American, who blithely claims that pro wrestling is our most popular TV sport and who caricatures the current Administration as "semi-illiterate" (a grievous underestimation of people like Wolfowitz and Rice) only plays into the hands of the xenophobic, unilateralist right.

So where is this knee-jerkerie coming from? Let's remember that Eagleton spent his young adulthood clawing his way to the top of the British intellectual establishment, only to discover once he got there that it had been supplanted, just as surely as the British economic establishment had been some decades earlier, by an American one. There's nothing like the rage of an old elite against a new one. Even in England, Oxbridge stopped being the place to be a long time before Eagleton jumped ship, the last provincial kid to notice that the magic world he'd once dreamed of had fallen into ruins. No wonder he's bitter.

But then, I'm an American, and I would say these things (or maybe it's just that I'm better able to notice them). And in any case, I'm probably being overingenious. After all, is it that hard to explain what Eagleton's up to? The prolificness, the self-plagiarism, the snappy, highly consumable prose and, of course, the sales figures: Eagleton wishes for capitalism's demise, but as long as it's here, he plans to do as well as he can out of it. Someone who owns three homes shouldn't be preaching self-sacrifice, and someone whose careerism at Oxbridge was legendary shouldn't be telling interviewers of his longstanding regret at having turned down a job at the Open University. But then, Eagleton is a past master at having it both ways. *After Theory* contains some important and timely ideas about the imaginative failures of the left, the moral shape of a just society and much else—it's just too bad they come from so dubious a source. But if the book sells as well as the one its title so deceptively evokes, at least he'll be able to buy himself another few houses. ■

Willi the Red

RUSSELL JACOBY

THE RED MILLIONAIRE: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West. By Sean McMeekin. Yale. 397 pp. $32.50.

"This act of incendiarism is the most monstrous act of terrorism so far carried out," reported a 1933 Berlin newspaper. Hitler had been chancellor of Germany for less than a month when an arsonist torched the Reichstag, the German parliamentary building. For the Nazis, who blamed the Communists for the fire, the conflagration proved a godsend, an excuse to accelerate their mastery of Germany. Nazi minister Hermann Göring did not waste time. "The Communist deputies must be hanged this very night." The following day civil liberties were suspended. Within the month Parliament, purged of Communists and surrounded by storm troopers, gathered in an opera house and approved the so-called Enabling Act, the legal legislation that effectively delivered power to Hitler.

For Nazi opponents, the fire and its aftermath proved how brutally and quickly the Hitlerites were ending democracy. With the hope of stirring an indifferent world, exiled German Communists rapidly published an exposé that attained wide notice. *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror and the Burning of the Reichstag*, which appeared at the end of 1933 in several languages, contained a brief history of the Nazis, descriptions of the new concentration camps, names of those already murdered and an account of the Reichstag fire. It was published in the United States by the august firm of Alfred A. Knopf. The book listed no author, but its mastermind was a Communist impresario, Willi Münzenberg.

The *Brown Book* may have been Münzenberg's finest hour. Today only the cognoscenti of international Communism remember him; even yesterday he was not well-known. He was a genius of Communist propaganda and front organizations, but rarely took top—or any—billing. Almost from the time he hooked up with Lenin in 1916 as a German socialist youth activist to the end of the 1930s, he lived amid a blizzard of front organizations and publications. Many of these never had a life outside his office. The *Brown Book*'s title page claims authorship by "The World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism." That was Münzenberg and a few friends. Arthur Koestler, who worked with him on the *Brown Book*, recalled in his own memoirs that Münzenberg, whom he calls "the Red Eminence" of international anti-Fascism, "produced International Committees, Congresses and Movements as a conjurer produces rabbits out of his hat: the Committee for the Relief of the Victims of Fascism; Committees of Vigilance and Democratic Control; International Youth Congresses." Koestler adds that a biography of Münzenberg, "if it should ever be written would be one of the most revealing documents" of the interwar period.

Some fifty years after Koestler's words we do have a biography, *The Red Millionaire*, a reworked dissertation by a professor of Russian studies. The good news is, the facts are here; the bad, the light is harsh and distorting. In the contemporary style of conservative anti-Communism, Sean McMeekin inflates Münzenberg's role as evil Communist propagandist and damns him every chance he gets. He begins by admitting that Münzenberg is "little remembered," but continues that not so long ago "the utterance of his name aroused fear, loathing and admiration among the world's political classes." Poppycock. McMeekin does not show that and cannot. He writes that Münzenberg ran from his "headquarters" a "seemingly invincible network of Communist front organizations" and that many famous intellectuals "came under his ever-expanding organizational spell." Balderdash. The spellbound intellectuals McMeekin lists include Albert Einstein, Henri Barbusse and Bertolt Brecht. None needed help from Münzenberg to sign up for the anti-Nazi cause.

McMeekin hypes everything about Münzenberg—his power, impact, deviousness and money. The bigger he is, the more he can slam him. The book's title illustrates McMeekin's disingenuousness. "I have found no usage of this term ["The Red Millionaire"] by any of Münzenberg's rivals or enemies," the conscientious scholar admits. He does discover, however, that Münzenberg's wife, Babette Gross, "bandies" the

Russell Jacoby, who teaches history at UCLA, is the author of The End of Utopia, The Last Intellectuals *and other books. His new book,* Reviling Utopia, Revising Utopia, *is forthcoming from Columbia University Press.*

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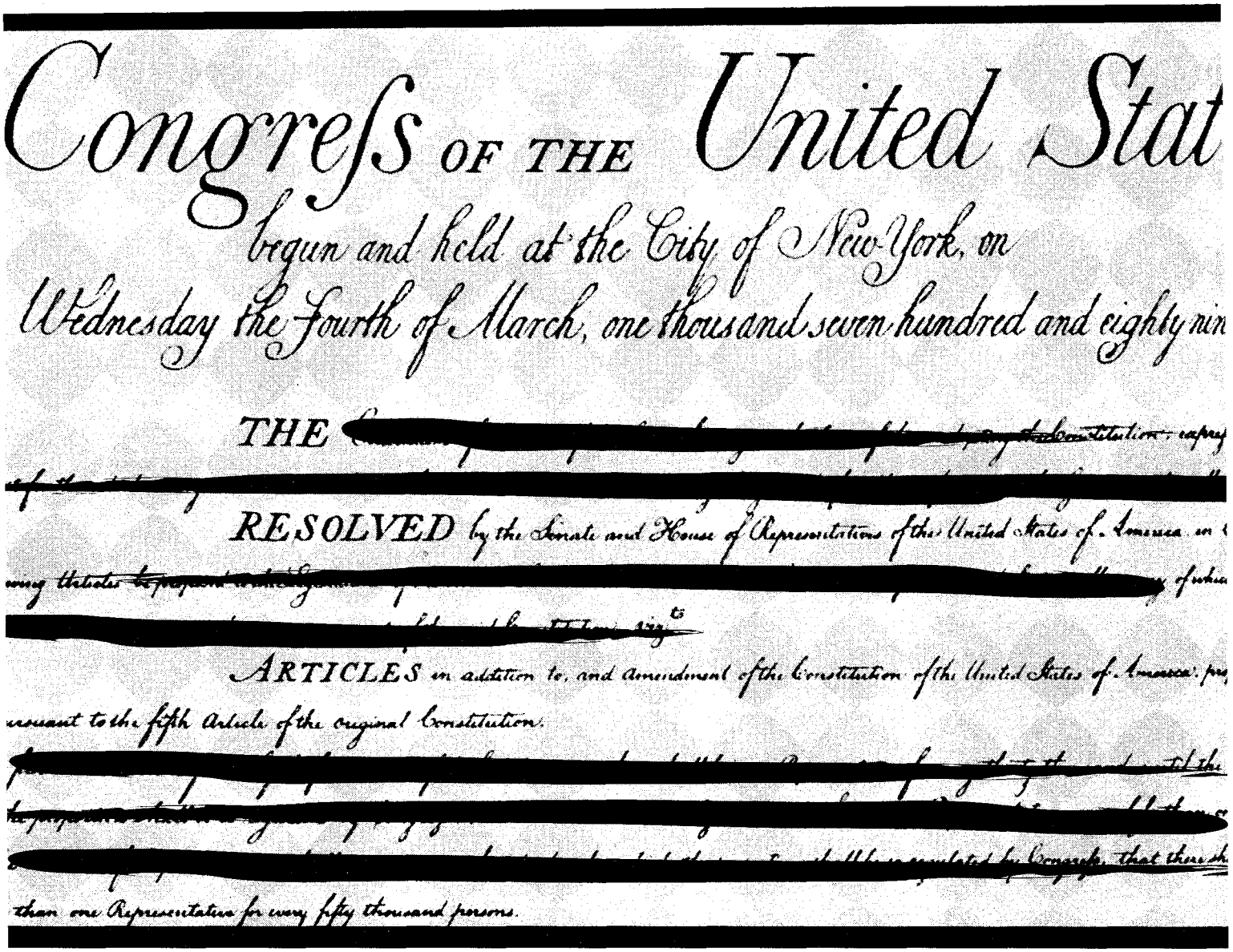
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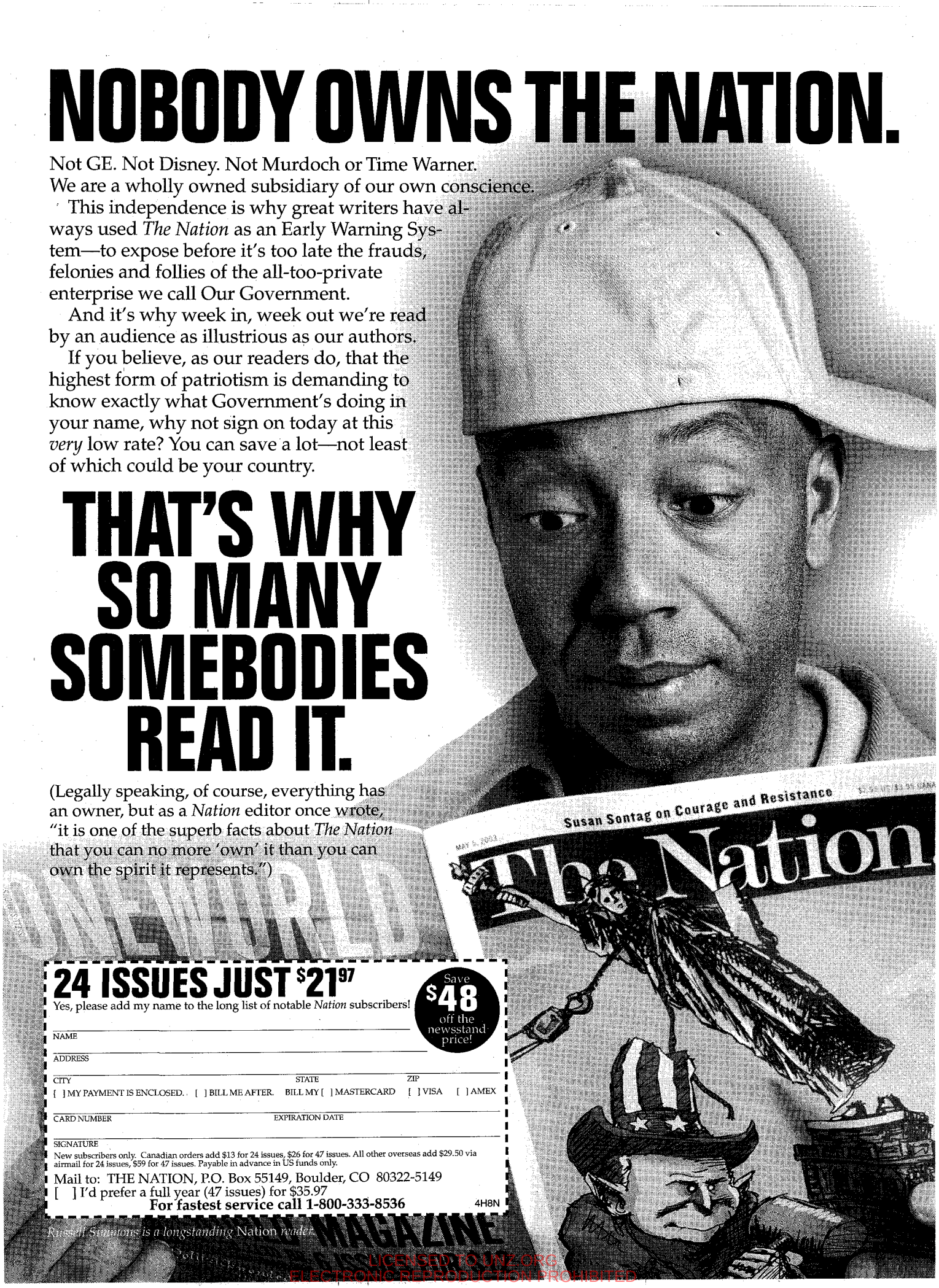

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Russell Simmons is a longstanding Nation *reader.*

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label about in her biography-memoir. She even titles a section of her book "The Red Millionaire." He does not note that she airs the charge in order to refute it. According to Gross, "There was nothing in Münzenberg's private life to lend credence to the legend of the 'Red Millionaire.'" No matter. For McMeekin the legend lives.

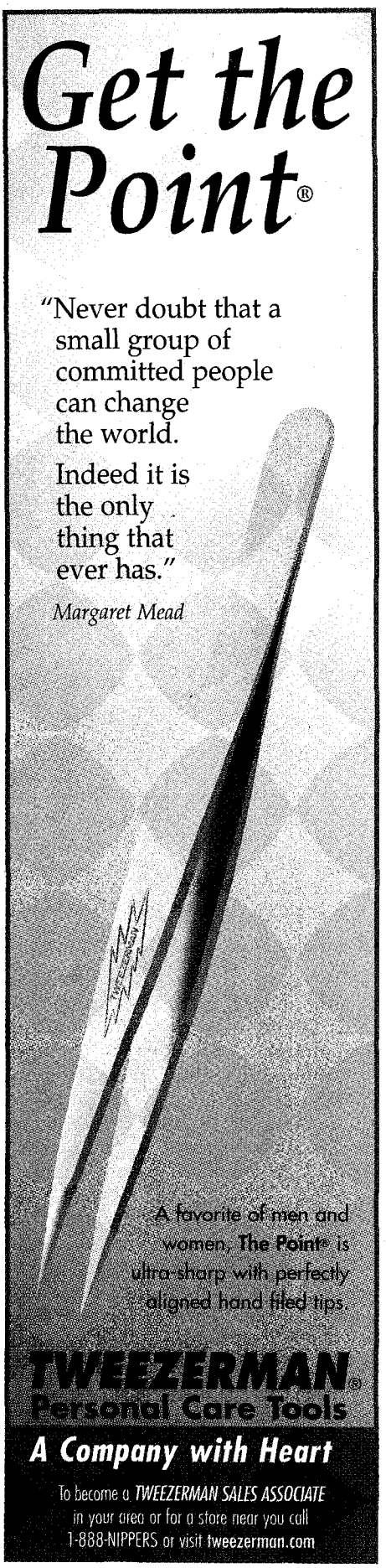
In chapter after chapter McMeekin hammers Münzenberg for sins, crimes and malfeasance. For McMeekin, Münzenberg was a master liar, defending the Soviet Union and its insupportable politics through a myriad of newspapers and organizations. Yet McMeekin comes up with little to justify his perpetual outrage. Indeed, for McMeekin, Münzenberg can do no right. If he succeeds at something, he is selling "snake oil" for the money. If he fails—such as in his efforts to promote unwatchable Soviet films—he was an untalented phony. He dubs the *Brown Book* "a fraudulent hack job," even though most of it was a decent report on the Nazi regime. He even criticizes Münzenberg for fleeing Germany with the rise of Hitler. This must be a first. Many historians have wondered why targeted victims stayed in Germany; McMeekin wonders why they left. He knows why. Münzenberg's "preference for self-preservation over martyrdom had long been evident to anyone paying the slightest attention to his career." McMeekin prefers his protagonist to die in a concentration camp.

By the end of the book McMeekin is foaming at the mouth. Münzenberg used "blood money to whitewash Communist tyranny." By "shilling so shamelessly for Moscow" he poisoned politics. McMeekin charges him with "crimes against humanity." He virtually accuses Münzenberg of destroying the World Trade Center. "It is hardly an accident that the kinds of fronts Münzenberg invented...are now exploited by the world's most formidable terrorist organizations. Nor is it a coincidence that today's masterminds of suicide bombings cloak their operations in the two most successful 'progressive' propaganda themes Münzenberg pioneered...anti-imperialism and antifascism." What exactly does this mean? That Osama bin Laden studied Münzenberg? That antifascism leads to suicide bombings?

In fact, Münzenberg appears to have harmed no one except himself. By 1939 he had had enough of his Soviet masters. In a sometimes eloquent statement moaning that "regimented, dominated and bullied souls" cannot lead an anti-Nazi struggle, he withdrew from the party. McMeekin characteristically sneers at Münzenberg's resignation—and hardly cites it. He cannot abide that Münzenberg did not join a conservative think tank but prepared to launch a new socialist group with ex-party members like Koestler. Yet the hour was late for ex-Communist German refugees like Münzenberg; they were unwanted by the Western democracies and wanted by the Nazi and Soviet secret police. With the outbreak of the war and the German invasion of France, Münzenberg, along with other German citizens, was interned in a French camp near Lyons.

With the advance of the Nazis, its inmates were directed in June 1940 to another location farther south. Münzenberg took counsel with several refugees, which included Kurt Wolff, later a distinguished American publisher. Münzenberg thought they should separate and individually try to reach Marseilles and a boat to freedom. The others disagreed, but Münzenberg headed off on his own. Five months later two hunters found Münzenberg's decaying body less than a hundred miles away in the woods. He had hanged himself or had been hanged. Local authorities ruled it a suicide, and had little interest in pursuing the matter. After the war friends and scholars, including Stephen Koch in his 1994 book *Double Lives*, explored the mysterious circumstances of Münzenberg's demise. Suicide seems likely, but McMeekin finds the explanation "unsatisfactory." In any event, he believes that if Stalin's agents did not kill him, they would have "sooner or later." For McMeekin, who comfortably assumes the role of God, so much the better. His book closes intoning that "in Münzenberg's ghastly death there is a kind of justice."

What sort of justice? Münzenberg was hardly a saint, but he was certainly not a criminal. In her much more evenhanded book, his wife calls him a "man of contradictions." In his wonderful memoirs, *The Owl of Minerva*, Gustav Regler acknowledges that Münzenberg believed that "cynical lying must be fought with equal cynicism," but also called him a "prophet in the wilderness," one of the few who foresaw the dangers of Nazism. That seems right. For all his faults, Münzenberg can be viewed as a civilian general in the fight against fascism; he belonged to a generation of writers and activists who joined the Communist movement in their youth and withdrew in the late 1930s. The classic collection of ex-Communist writers, *The God That Failed*, contains essays by Koestler, Richard Wright, André Gide, Ignazio Silone and others. Does McMeekin believe they all should hang? Koestler had hoped a biography of Münzenberg would reveal something of the interwar period. Instead, we have a tract that reveals only a small-minded and self-righteous professoriate. ■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Robert Smith, seated center, with the Cure in 1985

Men in Black

DOUGLAS WOLK

THE CURE

Several generations of doomy, bookish youth have grown up listening to the Cure. Lead singer Robert Smith has the worldview of a bummed-out, romantic, quasi-solipsistic teenager, and he has expressed it magisterially for a quarter-century, in a voice unlike any other pop star's: less singing than sobbing on key. His voice is quavering and nasal; it seems to be only tenuously connected to pitch—there's a permanent lump in his throat—until you notice how acrobatic it is. He can leap up into a whooping falsetto and make it sound like his voice is just cracking, or give the impression that he's groaning to himself under his breath, and half-incidentally finessing a tune in the process. And his persona—literate, unmacho and three parts despondent to one part manically goofy—has become a subcultural archetype. For anyone who's belonged to the goth subculture anytime since the mid-1980s, liking the Cure has been de rigueur, and Smith's baggy all-black outfits and eyeliner are the scene's official uniform.

Is it possible for a group that sells millions of albums to be a cult band? The Cure act like it, and so does their audience, as large as it's gotten. The fans in the arena believe they have a shared, peculiar taste the rest of the world will never understand, and the Cure cult is as devoted as any in popular music. A few years ago, a couple of Argentine fans assembled *Concise Pink Pig Atlas: The Whole Cure in the Mirror*—a *fourteen-CD* set on which Cure devotees around the world recorded their (adoring, amateurish) versions of every song Smith has ever written—and presented it as a thank-you gift to every member of the band, past and present.

Now the Cure themselves have released a four-CD set (on what appears to be the occasion of a contractual obligation) called *Join the Dots: B-Sides & Rarities 1978–2001 (The Fiction Years)*. ("Fiction" is the British label that's been putting out their records since they were teenagers in Crawley, Sussex.) There's certainly the scent of contract-filler about it; in the past fourteen years, the Cure have managed to complete only three new studio albums, although they've marked time with a remix collection, three live albums, their second and third greatest-hits discs and now this box of ephemera—a comprehensive history of the band, minus all of its landmarks.

Smith has been the only constant member of the Cure—occasionally their *only* member, period—and his voice has been the only unvarying element of their sound. (Other musicians have appeared with him in videos and on stage, sometimes for years on end, but nobody can remember what any of them look like.) His lyrics, on the other hand, are remarkably consistent in tone and diction. Four words are the cardinal points of Smith's compass: "girl," "dream," "mouth" and "never." They appear again and again in his songs, sung with special relish, bent into new shapes every time.

"Girl": The object of desire, the reification of everything that is longed for and can't be had. "The girl was never there/It's always the same/I'm running towards nothing/Again and again and again," he sings in "A Forest," the Cure's signature song. The way he regards the "girl" is objectification, for sure, but of a strange kind: The world outside the self and the beloved rarely appear at all in Smith's lyrics, and when he addresses a "you," it's usually implicit that the person he's speaking to isn't supposed to hear him. "You're just an object in my eyes," he sneered on an early, punk-era song. Well, all right, then.

"Dream": Smith invokes dreams (and waking up) habitually, although rarely as a psychological reinterpretation of real life. For him, dreaming and waking mean passing from one mode of perception to another, with little sense that one is more real than the other. "If only I was sure/That my head on the door was a dream," he sings in what's otherwise a relatively cheerful love song, "Close to Me." *Join the Dots* alone includes songs called "The Dream," "A Japanese Dream" and "A Pink Dream."

"Mouth": Not the seat of language, in Cure songs, but the consuming, sexual part of the physical self. The classic form of Smith's stage makeup centers on a grotesque smear of lipstick across his mouth as much as on the immense shock of black hair radiating out from his head. His mouth-images are accordingly gruesome and violent: "A hand in my mouth/A life spills into the flowers"; "Cut the conversation/Just open your mouth"; "Your tongue is like poison/So swollen it fills up my mouth."

"Never": For Smith, as a professional pop existentialist, the sensory world is one big denial—a place that presents mirages of happiness and snatches them away. "I

Douglas Wolk writes on pop for the Village Voice, Rolling Stone *and other publications. His book* James Brown Live at the Apollo *will be published by Continuum Books this summer.*

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will never be clean again," he sang in 1982; "you make me feel like I am clean again," he sang in 1989 (and notice that's not "you make me clean again"). "I'll never understand," "I'll never feel again," "I never thought this day would end," "I'll never say those things to you again." He sings "never" the way Joey Ramone sang "wanna"—that little word implies an entire philosophy of being.

Smith's secret to maintaining his passionate following is that he is, himself, the Cure's most fervent cultist; at every opportunity, he rewards the faithful. He apparently believes (as do the most hardcore Cure fans) that the three pillars of the band's discography are *Pornography* (1982), *Disintegration* (1989) and *Bloodflowers* (2000): their darkest, most difficult albums. (On a 2002 tour, they performed all three in their entirety, separated by intermissions.) I'd agree on *Pornography* and *Disintegration* (though the latter for its breakthrough American hit "Lovesong," rather than for its lugubrious drama), and demur on the uneven *Bloodflowers*, on which the romantic, quasi-solipsistic teenager realizes he's pushing 40 and can't make a career out of being bummed out anymore.

"I genuinely felt that I wasn't going to be alive for much longer, and I tried pretty hard to make this feeling come true," Smith comments in *Join the Dots*' liner notes about the band's 1981–82 period. No kidding. *Pornography* is, for the most part, a suicide note of an album; it gets blacker and blacker for forty minutes until, at the very end, Smith can be heard through an ocean of murk, screaming, "I must fight this sickness/Find a cure."

Apparently, he did. Six months later, the Cure emerged from their Young Werther period with a relatively sunny little synth-pop single, "Let's Go to Bed," not a come-on but a head game: "I don't want it if you don't/And I won't say it if you don't say it first." It became an early MTV favorite and began a trail of American alternative rock hits that eventually led to their best and best-selling album, the multiplatinum collection variously known as *Standing on a Beach* and *Staring at the Sea*.

Although the *Pornography/Disintegration/Bloodflowers* partisans would hesitate to admit it, the 1986 hits collection is the real cornerstone of the Cure's career. (Smith's dismissal: "People who wouldn't buy the rest of our albums because they think we might be too difficult for them bought that.") Both titles are phrases from their first single, 1978's "Killing an Arab," a taut little meditation on a scene from

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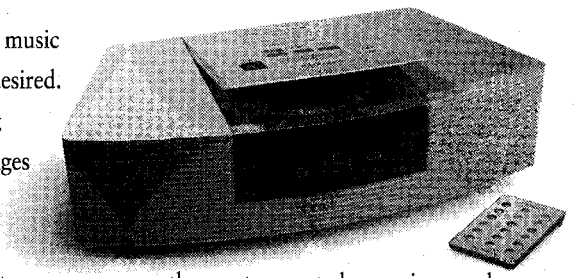

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Author and Columnist for The New York Times
on
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February 1 • 11:30 AM
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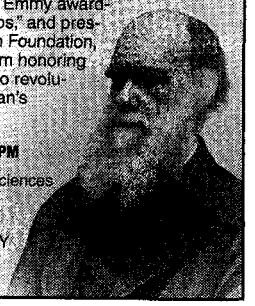

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Albert Camus's *The Stranger*. *Staring at the Sea* was the CD; one version of *Standing on a Beach* was the LP. The version every self-respecting disaffected American teenager in 1986 bought, though, was the other one: the cassette.

Standing on a Beach, the tape, had the LP's contents (all the hits!) on one side; if you turned it over, you heard a dozen B-sides. For those who are too young or too old to remember that particular moment in pop history, the practice among the most creatively fertile bands in the 1980s was to release a steady trickle of singles, a few every year. They'd usually be taken from albums, but on the B-side of the vinyl single there'd be an otherwise unavailable treat for fans: an odd little experiment, a live recording, a song that hadn't fit on the album. The Cure had some great ones, and the second side of the *Beach* tape included most of their best throwaways: a feral slow-motion glide called "New Day," whose title Smith gargle-screams like it's being tortured out of him, the claustrophobic/homoerotic synth-pop blurt "A Man Inside My Mouth," a punk song called "I'm Cold" with its vocal smeared across the mix like a bug on a windshield.

With the impending obsolescence of the cassette format, and the mid-30s consumer power of those 1986 teenagers, *Join the Dots* has become economically inevitable. Side two of the *Beach* tape is now the core of its first disc, and the other three discs extend its trajectory through the recent past—more B-sides, then "bonus tracks" from CD singles after seven- and twelve-inch vinyl stopped being a viable commercial medium in the early 1990s, and finally alternate mixes to pad out the collection. It would be hard to argue that many of these seventy songs are among the Cure's major work. That's sort of the point.

If you are a casual admirer of a band (or, for that matter, of any kind of artist), the major works are quite enough. If you're a serious fan, though, and especially if you're a cultist, throwaways and ephemera become enormously more important: They flesh out the image of the artist in your mind, and inform your understanding of the major work. Smith has kept the extra stuff flowing for twenty-five years, in a way that makes it clear that, as much as he enjoys it himself, it's not to be evaluated by exactly the same metrics as his "real" records. (As excessive as nearly five hours of *Join the Dots* seems, there's plenty of stuff that *wasn't* included here.)

The rule of diminishing returns has set in as the Cure's cult has grown and Smith has gotten locked into his lipsticked, fright-wigged persona. At some point, his gift for sharply snaking melodies wriggled away from him—probably around the same time that the Cure's songs stopped being compact and hook-driven and started being based on tedious midtempo rambles. The third and dullest disc of *Join the Dots* has exactly two memorable tunes, and they're both covers: Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze" and David Bowie's "Young Americans." ("We were trying to do something that was very grand," Smith admits of "Dredd Song" in the booklet, "but it somehow turned into something very grandiose." So why bother re-releasing it, then?) Most of the final disc meanders badly, too, and half of its songs are alternate versions of album tracks (including a new and annoyingly pointless remake of "A Forest").

Still, even on autopilot, the Cure sometimes manage to get over by the sheer force of their style. *Join the Dots*' second disc includes an audacious joke: three consecutive versions, from 1990, of the Doors' rather un-Cure-like "Hello I Love You." The first is in the slowest of their standard modes: a lotus-eater's tempo, Smith's moan echoing backward and forward so that the H in "hello" is aspirated for a few moments before it appears, quilt-thick keyboards droning away. The second returns to the brisk snap of their hits of that period, and the whole band perks up; Smith is playful, scatting a little at the beginning, singing the words as if he's giggling and whimpering at the same time. The third is a ten-second punk-rock throwaway, included for the sake of excess. None of them are first-rank Cure, but as an illustration of how the band can switch on multiple kinds of Cure-ness at will, they're fascinating, and they're a prize for the faithful. That's the mark of a true cult artist: someone who can serve up leftovers and get away with calling it a feast. ■

IN BRIEF

Our Man in Chile

NINA ENGLANDER

THE PINOCHET FILE: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability.
By Peter Kornbluh. New Press. 551 pp. $29.95.

THE CONDOR YEARS: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents.
By John Dinges. New Press. 322 pp. $25.95.

When Chilean President Salvador Allende was overthrown in a bloody coup on September 11, 1973, the Nixon Administration declared its support for the "preservation of Chilean democracy." In fact, the United States had undermined democracy in Chile by covertly sabotaging Allende's democratically elected socialist government and supporting the brutal military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. The overthrow of Allende marked the beginning of an indiscriminate reign of terror in the name of fighting communism, which led to the murder, disappearance and death by torture of more than 3,000 Chilean citizens. In the years following the coup, General Pinochet's campaign of repression swept through South America from Chile to Uruguay, Argentina and beyond.

Two important new studies—Peter Kornbluh's *The Pinochet File*, and John Dinges's *The Condor Years*, both published by the New Press—shed light on this dark chapter in US foreign policy and Latin American history. Kornbluh's book is an unprecedented and admirably thorough dossier of truth and accountability regarding America's support for the atrocities committed in Chile. The study relies heavily on an extensive body of recently declassified government records to present new and telling evidence about the US government's relationship to Chile before, during and after Pinochet's rule. Beginning in the 1960s, Kornbluh traces the history of the American government's meddling in Chilean affairs, from its attempt to prevent president-elect Allende from taking office in 1970, to its substantial support for Pinochet, including financial resources and training for state-sponsored terror.

Nina Englander, a legislative assistant to a New York State assemblyman, is a former Nation *intern.*

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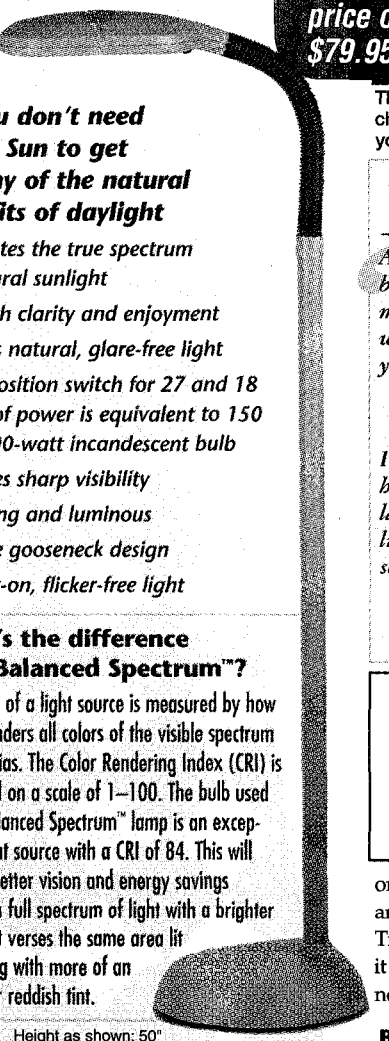

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By artfully selecting relevant quotations from the documents, while providing many in full text, Kornbluh unfolds the story in minute—and damning—detail.

John Dinges, for his part, explores the "underground history" of Operation Condor, a coordinated campaign of counterinsurgency organized by Pinochet and other South American military dictators to root out "terrorist" insurgents, as well as peaceful opponents of military rule. The formation of Operation Condor in November 1975 marked the first organized multigovernment effort to track down and eliminate leftists and dissidents throughout South America and abroad. In a lively narrative style, Dinges explores the background to high-profile Operation Condor assassinations and murder plots, such as the car-bomb murder in Washington, DC, of former Chilean Ambassador Orlando Letelier, and the plot to kill then-Congressman Edward Koch after he proposed legislation to cut off aid to the dictatorship in Uruguay. As Dinges acknowledges, such cross-border crimes accounted for a small percentage of the atrocious human rights violations committed by the military regimes. But they were particularly significant in bringing military leaders like Pinochet to justice. Dinges highlights the complicity of the CIA and other US government officials in Operation Condor activities—even when American citizens like Ronni Moffitt, who was killed in the car bomb along with Letelier, were targeted. The military leaders of the Southern Cone "found unequivocal support and public justifications for their war on Communism and terrorism." The affection was mutual. "You are our leader," Pinochet told Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, around the time the Chilean dictator gave the go-ahead to commit an assassination in Washington.

As both Kornbluh and Dinges demonstrate, the US government consistently lied about its involvement in supporting regimes that terrorized their own citizens, portraying South America's dictatorships as "emerging democracies" and glossing over their human rights violations. "The first and most enduring human rights casualty was the truth," Dinges concludes. *The Pinochet File* and *The Condor Years* touch directly upon issues at the center of today's debate over US foreign policy—like secrecy in the name of national security—and attest powerfully to the potential dangers of a lack of government transparency. As Dinges observes, "the echoes cannot be mistaken by those who care to listen." ■

FILMS

Europa, Europa

STUART KLAWANS

HIDING AND SEEKING • FILMS OF JERZY KAWALEROWICZ • BLIND SHAFT

Considered as a subset of the road movie, the post-Holocaust, return-to-Poland documentary has been a dismayingly static genre. Most of these films are journeys in only the physical sense. Finding what they'd intended to find, experiencing what they'd always felt, the protagonists typically undergo so little intellectual or spiritual movement that you wonder why they traveled at all.

This is not a complaint you can make against the new documentary by Menachem Daum and Oren Rudavsky, *Hiding and Seeking: Faith and Tolerance After the Holocaust*. Granted, you once again have the Jewish family in a van with their Polish driver, rolling up to the place where this synagogue was gutted or that gallows put up. The difference, though—the great, indispensable difference—is that with Rudavsky's help, Daum conceived of this trip as a true journey: a spiritual expedition for his two grown sons, and perhaps for the audience as well.

Profoundly concerned that his children's Judaism, like "all religions today," was "in danger of being hijacked by extremists," Daum took his black-hat sons to Poland in the hope of expanding the circle of their concern by a few inches, so that it might include at least some of the non-Jewish world. His project succeeded so unexpectedly, and spectacularly, that *Hiding and Seeking* is arguably unique among Holocaust documentaries. Although it's perhaps too warm, earnest and insistently personal to be a great movie, it's also far too important—and too moving—for anyone with a conscience to ignore.

A child of Holocaust survivors and member of New York City's Orthodox community, Daum makes an engagingly obsessed movie character: plump, broad-faced, white-bearded and sixtyish, with a manner so patient and amused that you don't care that he toys not just with the camera but with everyone else's mind. His sons care, though. Full-time yeshiva students who now live with their own families in Jerusalem, Tzvi Dovid and Akiva react to their father with the kind of incredulous laughter that might have turned derisive, were it not for the presence of a film crew and the stricture of the fifth commandment. "Papa, we love you," they keep saying in exasperation, as a way of dismissing his big-headed concerns. So what that he plays them a tape of a prominent American rabbi declaring that Jews must inculcate in their children an implacable hatred for the goyim. Yes, the language is radical, Tzvi Dovid and Akiva admit; but as for the substance...

How can Daum persuade these young men that goodness may be found in the non-Jewish world, even in its darkest corners? The answer is almost perverse: He takes his sons and wife to Poland. And there, toying with his family's minds, Daum looks for the Catholic farmers who risked their own lives during the war to save his father-in-law, hiding him and his brothers for more than two years.

Although Daum's search for the rescuers is a kind of brilliant improvisation, there is nothing uncalculated in the way it plays out in *Hiding and Seeking*. Each scene carefully establishes a stage in the sons' moral education, the first of which is discomfort: Upon touching down in small-town Poland, Tzvi Dovid and Akiva sidle along the street wearing tentative, sickened grins—and we can see why, since the camera captures the locals as they stare at the black hats and laugh. Next comes the eruption of the sons' own mockery, helping them to separate themselves from Daum's holy foolishness. (Since he goes so far as to tuck a memorial slip of paper into a utility pole on an empty lot, the audience may well laugh, too.) But then the first tears fall, when Tzvi Dovid and Akiva encounter sites with enough visible relics to move them; and finally astonishment walks into the picture in the form of a doubled-over, octogenarian Polish farm woman.

This is Honorata Matuszczyk Mucha, inching out of her rural yard to greet the strangers who just drove up out of nowhere. "Madame, do you remember the Jews who were here, in the war?" asks the driver in Polish. Honorata painfully twists

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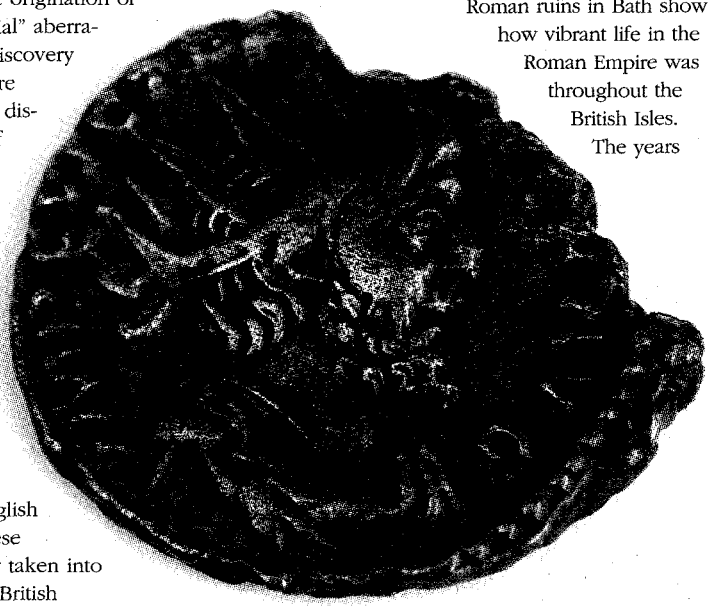
The Story of the British Museum, The Roman Empire and a UFO?

Not long ago, Thomas Cook was examining the strange and mysterious crop circles that had been cut into his farm in Lincolnshire England. While trying to define the origination of these "extraterrestrial" aberrations, he made a discovery that was much more down to Earth. He discovered a hoard of Roman Empire coins in a buried earthenware pot that dated to 270 AD! It was a find of a lifetime. He didn't find any evidence of a UFO but he did find an amazing archaeological site.



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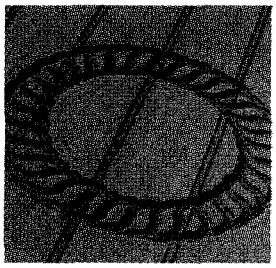

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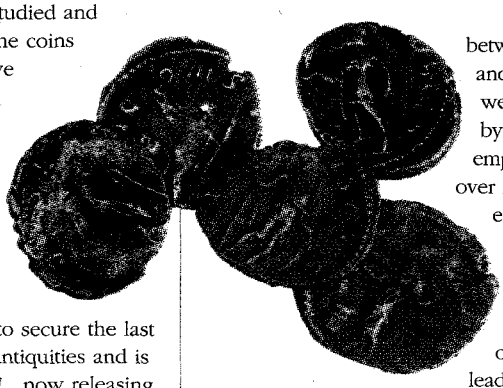

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her neck upward, so she can see who she's talking to; she gives a vigorous, off-center nod. Then, in a sure voice, she quickly pronounces the names of all three brothers, and so transforms the entire Daum family.

Hiding and Seeking does not seem an artful film; and yet you feel, at this moment, that the medium must have been invented just to show you the change in these people's faces. Nothing but film could make the emotion so communicable—and this scene is just the first of an unbroken outpouring, which now flows until the very end of the movie. To say that some of these feelings are regretful, rancorous or unresolved—with Akiva, in particular, striving to change as little as possible—is only to say that Daum and Rudavsky have given you not tap water but a flood, mud included.

Here is the only post-Holocaust, return-to-Poland documentary ever to end with a tearful visit to the *Catholic* cemetery. Whether such generosity of spirit can heal the world, I don't know; but I'm sure that Daum and Rudavsky have made the world feel like a better place, if only for ninety minutes.

Too bad that the new anti-Semites—who don't exist, according to Brian Klug in *The Nation*—want to see them both dead.

More Poland, more Jews: I hope *Nation* readers in the New York area will visit the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center for the retrospective *History Lessons: The Films of Jerzy Kawalerowicz* (through February 12), which includes screenings of his remarkable 1982 drama *Austeria*. Set in the countryside of Polish Galicia (the director's native landscape) on the first day of World War I, *Austeria* is the story of all sorts of Jews—secular, Orthodox, Hasidic, theatrical—holed up in a wayside inn as the Cossacks approach. In effect, the film re-creates in miniature a vanished world, complete with its rituals, songs, bickering, humor and guilty sexiness. This achievement, which is considerable in itself, is made all the more compelling in *Austeria* by the character of the salty old innkeeper, Tag (Franciszek Pieczka), who understands his guests so well that he can neither be one of them nor put himself at a distance.

One of the directors who remade Polish cinema in the 1950s, Kawalerowicz went on to create a fascinating range of historical films: from the investigative drama *Death of a President* (1977), set in 1920s Poland, to lavish but literate sword-and-sandal epics (*Pharaoh*, 1966 and *Quo Vadis*, 2001). He is not as well-known in this country as such colleagues from the Polish Spring as Andrzej Wajda and Andrzej Munk—and that makes the Walter Reade series all the more welcome. For complete information: (212) 875-5600 or www.filmlinc.com.

Here's some of what you can pick up by watching Li Yang's noirish thriller *Blind Shaft*, which is having its US theatrical debut at New York's Film Forum:

Kids in China currently leave school in great numbers because their families can't meet the fees, and villages are losing their men because there's not enough paying work at home. Meanwhile, provincial cities and towns are filling up with drifters willing to work cheap—even in the privately owned coal mines, where you rent your safety helmet from the boss and then pray for the best. The standard payoff to the family of a dead miner: 30,000 yuan, or about $3,600.

All this is interesting enough as information—so interesting that the Chinese government would prefer that *Blind Shaft* not be shown. But if you go to the film expecting an exposé, then you will be underestimating Li Yang's cleverness in telling a story. He treats the scandalous details as a background; the foreground belongs to his two main characters, Song (Li Yixiang) and Tang (Wang Shuangbao), who take poverty and corruption so much for granted that they make a practice of murdering their fellow coal miners, then pretending to be family members so they can collect the hush money.

Shot for the most part with a hand-held camera, sometimes in the depths of actual coal mines in the dry and hilly northwest, *Blind Shaft* starts out looking like a documentary but quickly turns into a suspense film. With the cash acquired through their latest murder, Song and Tang take off to enjoy a bender in town—boozing, whoring, singing a parody karaoke version of "Long Live Socialism"—and to recruit their next victim. He shows up at the day-labor market fresh off the bus: a 16-year-old boy, Yuan (Wang Baoqiang), who wears a perpetually candid expression and a jacket much too light for the weather. Within minutes, Yuan is begging to go to the coal mines and promising to call Song "uncle" at every opportunity. You see him get off the bus in the gray and lumpish landscape and trudge after the older men, struggling up and down a mountain for the sake of getting murdered; and from that point on, *Blind Shaft* is about the long, tense wait for a shovel to strike a skull in the blackness of a tunnel.

Blind Shaft might have been a better film if Yuan had been a little worse of a character. Even a studious, sexually immature 16-year-old would be more headstrong than this kid; maybe a whack with a shovel would help wise him up. Song, on the other hand, is no better than he should be—always putting off the murder, out of distaste for killing a boy, but never actually canceling it—and the dog-faced Tang is all too credible in his remorselessness. He's a human equivalent to the landscape of *Blind Shaft*, with its bare shacks, rubble and rushing wind. Maybe that's why your sympathies never lie entirely with the prospective victim. Through the sheer force of its physical details, *Blind Shaft* pushes you to see through the killers' eyes.

Brief, harsh, brutal—and informative—*Blind Shaft* is the best crime movie now on the screen. ■

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■Tired of Neanderthal attacks on evolution? On February 11 the Center for Inquiry–Metro New York presents Ann Druyan, noted science writer, producer of the award-winning series *Cosmos* and president of the Carl Sagan Foundation, in a 195th-birthday tribute to Charles Darwin. Her lecture—"Escape From Eden"—begins at 6:30 PM at the New York Academy of Sciences, 2 East 63rd Street. Suggested admission $10. See ad on p. 31 of this issue of *The Nation* for additional information.

The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: $175 for 50 words; $225 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) $2.00 each. To place an ad, call Leigh at (212) 209-5414.

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ART

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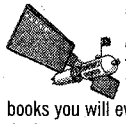

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INFORMATION NEEDED

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SHORT, SHARP SOCIALIST seeks same (only taller): 53-year-old woman, Philadelphia. Reply to Nation Box 381, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

PHD ECONOMIST, widower of 3 1/2 years, active, middle 80s, sense of humor, politically active, interested in music, the arts and good food, sociable, financially secure. New York City residence and weekend country home, seeks companion to share time, living and a growth of intimacy. Reply to Nation Box 382, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

WOMAN OF A CERTAIN AGE *MAIS TOUJOURS BELLE*: Small-boned blonde, 105 lbs (I've been told that I look like a movie star), journalist, foreign correspondent, now retired, long based in Paris. Now living in Washington, DC. Seeks educated professional with *joie de vivre*. Reply to Nation Box 383, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

ISO SON-IN-LAW. Sincere cerebral compassionate scientific self-assured imaginative tolerant natural individualist optimist funny, for family with my outstanding daughter. SASE biography. Reply to Nation Box 384, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

56-YEAR-OLD PROGRESSIVE WIDOWER, aviation professional, enjoys outdoors, camping, traveling, cultural/music events, ISO SF, 45–59, Albany, NY, Western MA, LTR. Reply to Nation Box 385, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

LEFTIST ACTIVIST/ECONOMIST, female, 42. Independent, affectionate. Incorrigible sense of humor. Love animals, nature, music. Enjoy exploring new places, near and far, but equally happy puttering about at home, reading, cooking. Seeking man with dry wit, big heart and passion for social justice and the environment. Reply to Nation Box 386, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

THOUGHTFUL, CARING, LEFTY (from the days when left was voting for Adlai Stevenson, not Bill Clinton), hoping for someone to spend time with over a glass of wine, dinner, the theater...not a big deal. Just a nice time. Reply to Nation Box 387, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

If responding to a Nation Box number, send replies to: Nation Box ___, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

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ORGANIZATIONS

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LAS VEGAS AREA *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is looking for new members. Contact Harold Barling, (702) 736-6905, for more information.

HUNTINGTON, LI, NY, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is looking for new members. Call John Valenti, (631) 549-3926.

BRONX (RIVERDALE)/WESTCHESTER, NY, *NATION* DISCUSSION Group meets one afternoon a month. For further information please phone Florence Gold at (718) 549-1601.

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END THE DRUG WAR: See www.AddictInTheFamily.org, www.DrugWarFacts.org, www.CSDP.org, www.MedicalMJ.org and www.DrugSense.org.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER: American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker-based organization, seeks FT organizer for Southeastern New England Program based in Providence. Program foci include peacebuilding & disarmament, youth & nonviolence, and alternative globalization. Salary $26,873–$32,591, depending on experience; excellent fringe benefits. Send résumé and letter of interest by February 13 to Phyllis Cohen, AFSC, 2161 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140; fax (617) 354-2832; e-mail pcohen@afsc.org. AFSC is an AA/EO employer.

COPY EDITOR. Part-time opening in the *Nation* copy department for assistant copy editor. Send résumé to Copy Chief, *The Nation*, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003 or e-mail to rcarey@thenation.com. AA/EOE.

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***THE NATION*, AMERICA'S OLDEST** and fastest-growing political magazine, seeks student representatives nationwide. Help us build a student movement, amplify our progressive politics, unseat George W. Bush in 2004 and introduce *The Nation* to a new community. We're looking for students to help us sell subs, give away copies of the mag, assist us in placing articles in student publications, coordinate events, distribute books, curriculum material, buttons, T-shirts and posters. Be your school's "source" for Nation Activist Materials. For more info, e-mail students@thenation.com.

HELP BUILD THE PROGRESSIVE LABOR MOVEMENT in Pennsylvania! The Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the largest and fastest-growing union in the country, and SEIU District 1199P, a progressive, 20,000-member statewide healthcare workers' union in Pennsylvania, are seeking applicants for union staff positions in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg and other locations across the state. We are engaged in several large, strategic campaigns among registered nurses and other hospital employees, direct care workers in the mental health/mental retardation and other disabilities sector, and nursing home and home care workers. Our vision is to unite workers and patients/residents/consumers to build a *just healthcare and social service system that puts people* before profits! We are currently recruiting for: District 1199P/SEIU Organizing Director; District 1199P/SEIU Political Program Coordinator; Staff Recruitment and Development Coordinator; Union Organizers; Union Representational Staff; Communications Coordinator; Political/Community Organizer; Campaign Researcher; Legislative Campaign Coordinator; prior labor movement experience is preferred. Send cover letter and résumé to: Fran Campo, 1199P/SEIU, 1500 N. 2nd St., Harrisburg, PA 17102; e-mail Fran1199p@aol.com. Affirmative action employer.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

EXTENSION ASSOCIATE, SR (01786) (Labor Educator) Senior Extension Associate Positions, (2) Cornell University. Located in the Finger Lakes region of New York State, Cornell University is committed to creating a more diverse and inclusive campus in which to work, study, teach and serve. The School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University is seeking qualified candidates for two Labor Educator positions in Western New York. Primary responsibilities: develop, promote, teach, recruit and coordinate credit and noncredit programs for students and practitioners, with primary responsibilities focused on training for labor unions and union members. Keep abreast of practices, developments and ideas in union strategy and labor relations through reading, consultation with colleagues and practitioners, and attendance at conferences and seminars. Qualifications: Minimum of master's degree in appropriate field with experience working with the labor movement or on union staff. Experience in adult education in field of labor relations. Demonstrated ability to work effectively with a variety of people, including colleagues in management, labor relations and labor education programs as well as clients, instructors, administrators and support staff. Demonstrated ability to write effectively and speak articulately to groups of various sizes. Ability to represent the Extension Division to the public in a professional manner. Ability to develop, teach and administer educational programs effectively and efficiently. Interest in providing quality educational services to the school's clientele. Demonstrated knowledge of key issues in union strategy, i.e., organizing, political action, contract campaigns, role of women and people of color, labor in the global economy. Job requires the ability to travel and flexibility in working hours, including evening and some weekend work. Salary: $50,000–$60,000. Interested candidates should send letter of interest and résumé to: Cathy Mooney, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 309 Ives Hall, Ithaca, New York 14853-3901; e-mail cjm15@cornell.edu; tel (607) 255-4423; fax (607) 255-7774. Deadline for application materials: February 27. Cornell University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action educator and employer.

SEIU LOCAL 32BJ, a 70,000-member progressive building service union in the tristate area is hiring lead organizers, lead political/community organizers, lead researchers, lead campaign communicators, organizers, political/community organizers and researchers. Qualifications include commitment to social justice, ability to provide leadership/motivate diverse staff and workforce, ability to think strategically and work independently, willingness to work long/irregular hours. Fluency in Spanish or Creole a plus. Women and people of color strongly encouraged to apply. Send cover letter/résumé to Pedro Fuentes, SEIU Local 32BJ, 101 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013; fax (212) 388-3777; e-mail Pfuentes@seiu32bj.org.

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Attach ad, typewritten if possible.

The Nation, Classified Department, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003

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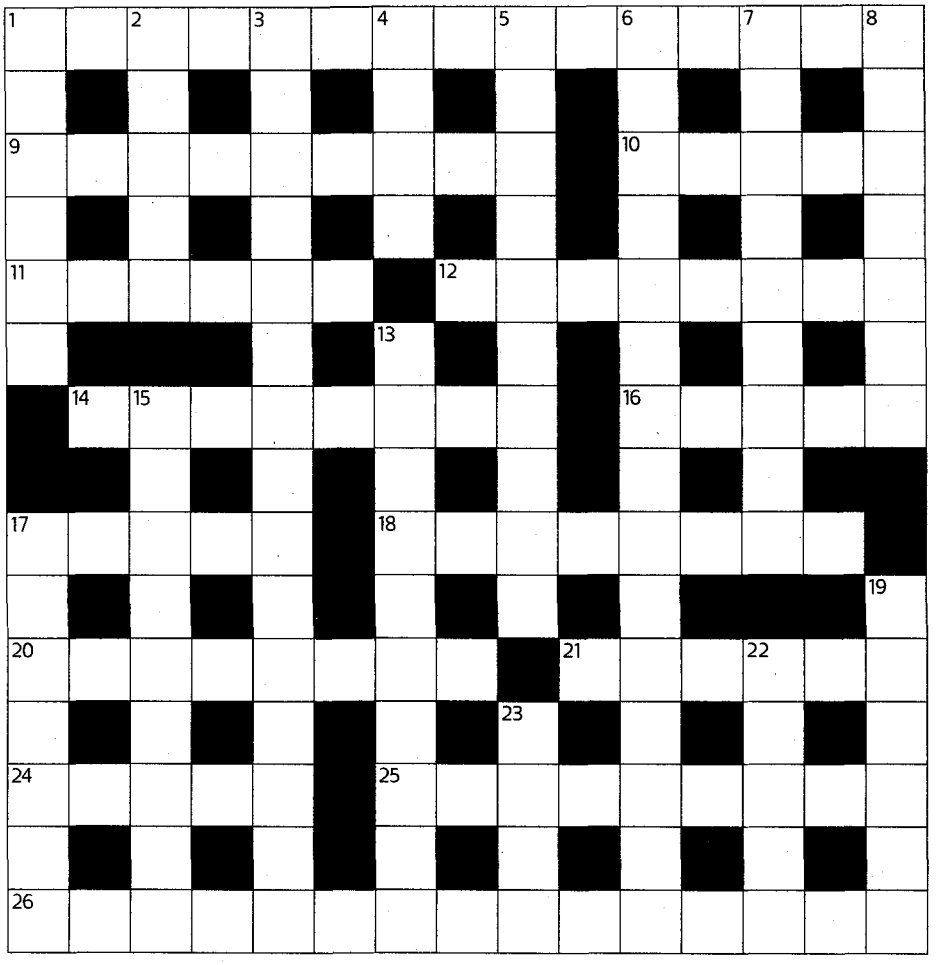

ACROSS

1 When a lot of army brass gets together, it's a worldwide meeting of minds. (7,8)

9 One who makes mittens takes a confused cry for help to heart, as a way to forget the imperfections. (5,4)

10 The Eagles of the Sea are perhaps seen right in it. (5)

11 Big shots in Scotland sort of sail, only about a little way. (6)

12 A euphemism, since people seldom take it so easy at the comfort station. (4,4)

14 Running it might be dangerous, but throwing it down is a real challenge. (8)

16 An old boat at the place Dorothy went, being in Alabama (or Missouri, if hilly). (5)

17 It's all right with a mixed type of animal! (5)

18 The guy with whom the gal goes out may be required to be so. (8)

20 Makes a face (in a pleasant way, however) about the sort of a tree that harbors mischievous creatures. (8)

21 What tellers do, if people happen to be the object. (6)

24 A foreign prince finds me in ever more poetic environment, at least for one spell of it. (5)

25 Put into the office with a sort of test that applies to at least one type of college… (9)

26 …and is not part of the usual business. (One more mutt goes to Rhode Island to see you, I hear, then Los Angeles to head right!) (15)

DOWN

1 and **17** It might be a joke with a broken leg, when it comes to such silly types—a whole flock of them! (6,2,5)

2 She proclaimed that she never wanted to be ruthless, properly. (5)

3 Where people live when retired is a lane—a different sort, however. (11,4)

4 This is nothing to certain court protagonists. (4)

5 Pine enters into its composition, which is rather twisty. (10)

6 Make up a game to circle ten, and it should prove a powerful draw! (15)

7 What boarders might be told, and possibly just be Navy "goo"! (3,6)

8 Mash! Mash it! The wild beast will eat it, yet you find cover for some women! (7)

13 The "Tiger of France." (10)

15 The lowering of things in a cellar? (9)

17 See 1 down

19 A touch of red or blue around the capital of Holland? Madness! (6)

22 Sort of try to see up where the big mountains might be found. (5)

23 Real bad, considering he made up all those funny poems! (4)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2926

T	H	E	O	D	O	L	I	T	E	■	F	L	O	W
A	■	N	■	I	■	A	■	R	■	A	■	E	■	I
K	I	M	O	N	O	S	■	I	N	D	I	C	E	S
I	■	A	■	G	■	S	■	M	■	V	■	T	■	H
N	E	S	S	■	F	I	R	M	B	E	L	I	E	F
G	■	S	■	M	■	E	■	E	■	N	■	O	■	U
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A	R	C	H	E	O	L	O	G	Y	■	G	R	I	N
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